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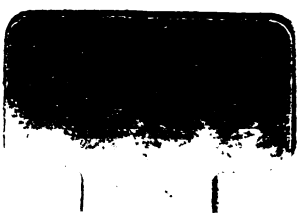

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AN

INQUIRY

INTO

THE STATE

OF THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES.

BY

JOSEPH LOWE, Esq.

Consule ergo rebus tuis, atque earum certam tibi et inexpugnabilem possessionem para. SENECA de Benef.

FOURTH EDITION.

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N.B. When the price of sugar is mentioned, the market price, or price inclusive of duty is meant, unless the word, "ex duty," be added. By a hhd. of sugar is meant a hhd. of 13 cwt. nett.

The First Edition was published in August, 1807, which is the period understood, when "the present time" is alluded to.

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INTRODUCTION.

EVERY successive coalition against France has failed, and has served only to consolidate the greatness which it was meant to humble. Britain must now seek, in a judicious direction of her own resources, that success which she has in vain expected from the co-operation of her allies. It is worthy of the spirit which we inherit from our ancestors, to bid defiance to a presumptuous enemy, and to meet, undismayed, the dangers which have overwhelmed our weaker neighbours. The means we possess amply justify our confidence, for they require only a skilful developement to render us invincible. Our numbers, our wealth, and, above all, the free and undaunted character of our people, form a bulwark, against which the efforts of France will be directed in vain.

But while the country is animated by a just confidence in regard to the extent of its re-

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sources, a considerable difference of opinion exists about the efficacy of the various modes in which these resources are called into action.—The legislature has been lately told by one of its own members*, that after spending fifteen years in endeavours to improve our military force, it was still at a wide distance from its object. This opinion is mentioned here, not with an intention of commencing a discussion foreign to the purpose of this Work, but to afford an example of the imperfection of several of our public measures. Indeed, the more we investigate the nature of our internal regulations, the more shall we be impressed with their inadequacy, both to the exigency of the times, and to the extent of our resources. The laws of our national economy will be found, in several respects, as objectionable as those of our military establishment. A change of circumstances has rendered many of our early regulations inexpedient and pernicious; but they have, notwithstanding, been allowed to subsist; not that we have wanted statesmen equal to the task of correcting these errors, and of displaying the national resources in all their energy; but because, since the ill-fated revolution of France,

* See Mr. Whitbread's speech, on July 31.

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the attention of these statesmen has been absorbed by the more urgent business of war. A deference to popular prejudices has also contributed to delay the adoption of several important amendments. From both these causes the accumulating evils have either escaped notice, or, if forced upon the attention of government, have been referred for consideration to a future period—a period of greater leisure to ministers, and of greater tranquillity to the nation.

A season, however, is now arrived, in which farther delay will be dangerous. We are left to our own unaided efforts; and, whether peace or war await us, it is obviously necessary that we should derive from our resources all the strength which an enlightened policy can afford. If, therefore, it appear that the general good can be promoted by a cession of the interests of a particular branch of the community, the present is, of all others, the time at which that cession is most required. And if it farther appear, that, by such a surrender, the conceding party sustains only an imaginary loss, no pains should be spared in the removal of whatever prejudices may be adverse to the national prosperity.

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The succeeding pages of this Work will show, by practical illustration, the community of interest which almost every member of the empire has in the welfare of the colonies. But every part of our history bears testimony to the happy effects of a liberal policy, and to the futility of the gloomy predictions, so often made by the enthusiastic advocates of narrow systems. In the commercial intercourse of nations, it was long thought, that whatever was gained by the one, must be lost by the other; but it is now pretty generally admitted that a rivalship in industry is profitable to both. It was foretold, that to sanction the independence of America, would give a death-blow to our trade; yet, not only has our general commerce far surpassed that of any former period, but our intercourse with America herself is in a tenfold degree more extensive than when her territory was subject to our control. If these facts be incontrovertible in regard to foreign countries, how much more strongly must they apply to the component parts of the same Empire? It was maintained, that the Union with Ireland would cause the ruin of our woollen manufactures. Has this consequence ensued? or, when were our woollen manufactures so prosperous

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as since the Union? The distinction which has so long been kept up between the Landed and Mercantile Interests, partakes of the imaginary character of the predictions I have mentioned. If each party will reflect dispassionately, they will find that there exists no real difference between them—that each is benefited by the success, and injured by the losses of the other. The prosperity of trade makes land sell in England for thirty years purchase, while in other countries it sells for twenty. The prosperity of the Landed Interest opens to the Merchant new channels of commerce. The union of the two in one state, forms a mixed commonwealth, of a far happier character than can be constituted by mere landholders, as in the South of Germany; or by mere merchants, as in Holland. Vices of government would arise from the exclusive preponderance of either party; but these are prevented or corrected by the salutary equipoise of the other. In paying the public taxes, as in every other respect, their interests are inseparably interwoven. When the burden is shared by both, is it not obvious, that whatever surplus may accrue from the prosperity of either goes to the common fund; and

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that every defalcation, on whatever side it may originate, is a common loss?

It is with principles such as these, that I proceed to the more immediate object of this Work. The West-India planter asks nothing except upon the broad grounds of national advantage. His situation has long been cruel, and requires only to be known to excite the sympathy of a generous people; but, in this season of general difficulty, it is well to be sparing of appeals to public generosity. Nor does the cause I have undertaken require them; it rests its claim for redress on a more solid ground—on the ground of its indispensable importance to the vital interests of the Empire.

Few subjects are less accurately understood by the public, than the real situation of the West-India trade. The number of ships which it employs, the quantity and value of the merchandise which they transport, suggest, to common observation, the idea of a traffic as lucrative to individuals, as it is important to the country. Impressed with the recollection of the splendid fortunes of which this commerce was once the source, and dazzled by its sur-

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prising extent, the world still associates prosperity and affluence with the name of West-India planter. A more attentive inquiry, however, will speedily dispel the illusion. It will teach us that, by conquering and improving the colonies of our enemies, we have incalculably depreciated our own; that with an annual importation, much exceeding our present annual consumption, and more than double our importation twenty years ago, we have failed to adapt to this extended supply a correspondent system of financial regulation; and that, while our manufactures and our public treasury derive an ample revenue from this branch of our commerce, the individuals immediately engaged in it experience only disappointment and loss. This inquiry will also show, that the taxes imposed on sugar, at the most flourishing period of the trade, have not only been continued during its depression, but progressively increased; that these taxes, which the legislature intended should be borne by the consumer, have fallen wholly upon the planter; and that, by a singular and melancholy coincidence, their amount has been augmented exactly in proportion as the planter's means of payment have diminished.

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The origin of these evils is to be found in the mistaken policy of the country during last war. The desolation of St. Domingo, and the insurrections in Grenada and St. Vincent's, by abridging the importation, had carried sugar, in 1797 and 1798, to a price which made the nation believe that we could continue to monopolize the supply of Europe. An attempt was therefore made to oblige foreigners to pay a part of the duty, instead of drawing the whole back, as formerly, on exportation. This impolitic regulation paved the way to the importation of sugar by neutrals, into the continental markets; and the extended cultivation of the Spanish, as well as of the French colonies, provides these rivals with ample cargoes. They can transport the produce of America to Europe, during war, at half the expense of the British merchants, both in freight and insurance. And even when we are willing to make a great sacrifice, and to sell our produce on the continent as low as neutrals, our access to this market is thwarted by the prohibitory decrees of France. Yet, while we are thus impeded in our foreign intercourse, along the whole line of coast, from Memel to Trieste, and confined, almost solely,

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to our own consumption, we are obliged to import annually a quantity of sugar, exceeding by one third the amount of that consumption. Every charge must continue to be paid with the same rigour as if the traffic were productive; and the result of this accumulation of evils is, that of the price paid for sugar by the public, not one farthing goes as profit to the planter. What industry can support these discouragements, or what capital can withstand such a complication of burdens?

The question, therefore, is reduced to this—the country must either essentially amend the condition of the persons engaged in the West-India trade, or renounce that trade for ever.

The inquiry, on which we are about to enter, is interesting to every class of subjects in the empire, and to none more than to those who think themselves unconnected with the fate of the West Indies. A number of gentlemen of landed property are said to entertain these sentiments. But this can proceed only from imperfect views of the subject, for we are justified in anticipating that, on a mature examination, the English landholder will

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find his interest to be closely interwoven with that of our colonies. He will perceive, that they not only supply a great part of that navy which guards his property from French invasion, but that they defray a surprising proportion of the public burdens—burdens which, in the event of the ruin of these colonies, must fall, with double pressure, on the landed interest of Great Britain.

The object of the following pages is to lay before the country a candid statement,

1. *Of the importance of the West-India trade, as a national object*;
2. *Of the ruinous condition of this trade under the present circumstances, and of the consequences of its loss to the Country.*—I shall afterwards submit,
3. *Observations on the means of relief; accompanied with some remarks on the effects of peace on this valuable traffic, as well as on the general commerce of the kingdom.*

The investigation of such a subject can obviously have no reference to the existing differ-

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ences between political parties. The question is strictly national. The great considerations which it involves are common to every party, and to every class of subjects in Great Britain; for these considerations are, the preservation of our revenue, the prosperity of our manufactures, the support of our navy.—The reader of the following pages will be offended by no invective, and deceived by no misrepresentation. He will meet with proofs deduced from official documents, and with arguments not constructed on visionary theories, but on the basis, unfortunately too authentic, of actual experience. The Author has no personal interest in the cause which he pleads, and he differs in several respects from the views attributed to those whose hardships he calls upon his countrymen to alleviate. He joins his individual voice to the national approbation of the abolition of the slave-trade, a measure which it is to be hoped is not only indelibly recorded in the Acts of the British Legislature, but about to communicate its beneficent influence to the councils of every maritime power. But it is one thing to annihilate this odious traffic, and another to deny to the industrious planter the reward of his labour. There cannot be a greater

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error than to class together, as indiscriminate advocates of the slave-trade, the cultivator, who, without desiring any foreign supply, increases, by humane attention, the number of his domesticated negroes, and the slave-factor, who was wont to calculate his profits by the amount of his fresh importations. The sense of the planters on this great question may be considered to have been correctly expressed by a highly respectable member of the House of Commons, who, in the various discussions which the subject has undergone, has urged no claim except that of compensation to certain individuals, unconnected with the traffic itself, but liable to suffer injury in their patrimonial properties by its abolition.

In the prosecution of his researches, the Author has been much aided by Sir William Young's West-India Common-Place Book, and Mr. Bosanquet's Pamphlets on the State of our Colonies. The one affords a valuable collection of documents, accompanied by judicious observations—the other abounds with sound and liberal views. In the former, we perceive how much information may be attained by the national representative, who will collect and

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digest the instructive materials submitted to the Legislature—in the other, we have an example (as yet too rare among our merchants) of the benefits which the theory of commerce may derive from applying a stock of practical knowledge to the formation of general views. How many merchants are rich in experimental information; and how little has political economy, the most important of sciences, profited by their exertions!

To those who are connected with the West Indies, it is likely that the whole of this pamphlet may afford some degree of interest. But the general reader, whose attention is fixed more on the result than on the detail of the inquiry, will be chiefly interested in the latter part—that part which begins in the Fourth Chapter, after the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons appointed to inquire into the commercial state of the West Indies, had come into the Author's hands.

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AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

STATE OF THE WEST INDIES.

CHAPTER I.

Value of the West Indies to Great Britain.

THE real wealth of an empire consists not in accumulated riches, but in the diffusion of industrious habits throughout the various classes of its population. However common, therefore, it may be with the inconsiderate to appreciate a branch of commerce by the amount which it adds to the monied capital of a country, the more attentive inquirer will form his estimate on different grounds. He will ask, as the primary consideration, what proportion of the lower classes of the community owe to this particular branch of commerce their employment and their subsistence; and after ascertaining its importance to that numerous portion of society who

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live by labour, he will proceed to investigate its value to the capitalist, whose province it is to give to that labour a beneficial direction. His next consideration will be, the value of this trade as a nursery of seamen; and it will not be denied that to a country like Great Britain, dependent for her rank among nations on the state of her maritime power, the education and maintenance of seamen is not only necessary for dignity, but indispensable for safety.

Let us, therefore, endeavour to ascertain the value of the West-India trade to Great Britain,

1. *As a source of employment to her artisans and labourers;*
2. *As a nursery of seamen;*
3. *As productive of public revenue.*

The traffic of Britain comprehends within its extensive sphere transactions with countries in the most opposite stages of commercial progress. Some nations may be considered as nearly in the same state as ourselves; others, like Holland, are reputed to be farther advanced; while a third class will be allowed by all to be far behind us. To the merchant, each of these different situations presents views of advantage or disadvantage, on the respective merits of which it is difficult to decide. But it is obvious that, to the manufacturer, that country is most valuable which has few manufactures in

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itself, and which sends us the produce of its soil in return for the produce of our labour. America (as Mr. Bosanquet remarks, in his very judicious Treatise on the Value of Commerce and Colonies*) stands to Britain in this predicament. To America, agriculture is evidently the most lucrative of occupations. She employs a portion of her people in navigation, and in the active interchange of various commodities; but she manufactures scarcely any of those commodities herself. She imports from this country not only her linens and her woollens; but even where the raw material is produced on her own soil, as in the case of cotton, she ships it to Britain; and takes back, both for consumption and for traffic, the cloths which our manufacturers have wrought up from her own produce.

Our West-India colonies afford employment to our manufacturers in a still greater proportion, for the extent of capital invested, than the United States of America. Let us hear in this respect the testimony of Mr. Bosanquet, whose habits of business qualify him to judge with particular accuracy of the value of this trade.

"†In all the leading features of advantage, the intercourse between Great Britain and the West-India Islands is eminently distinguished. Possessing

* Page 10.

† Thoughts on Commerce and Colonies, page 39.

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no manufactures, no means of supplying either their real or artificial wants, every individual article required by these islands, for use or show, is imported from Britain. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, a West-India planter is clothed by the manufactures of Great Britain and Ireland. Five hundred thousand negroes are constantly clad by the clothiers of Yorkshire and Wiltshire; not a button or a shoe, a pocket-handkerchief or a hat, are obtained elsewhere than in Great Britain. She supplies alike the utensils of domestic life and the implements of husbandry; the ash coppices of Sussex fall to bind the casks, and six millions of hoops are annually split in the service of the planter. The very provision for the negroes in the colonies, so far as the mother country dares undertake the supply, is the produce of the British soil. The sailing of a West-India convoy is an epoch in the diary of every shop and warehouse throughout the kingdom. Besides, all these investments are in that description of merchandize, the export of which is most beneficial to the State; every thing ready for use; every possible degree of labour bestowed upon it of which it is susceptible."

But, what is of still greater importance, the continuance of this lucrative traffic is infinitely more secure in regard to the West Indies than to America. America is not only a separate state, but a country of provisions. She contemplates the period when she may add the gains of manufacture to those of

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agriculture; and, with these views of policy, she spares no pains to increase her population. She already makes no scruple of holding out a non-importation act, as the alternative of not complying with her demands. Our West-India colonies, on the other hand, are not only subject to our control, but incapable, from inherent causes, of dispensing with the importation of manufactured goods. The only pursuit which can there be followed with advantage is the cultivation of the soil. Our manufacturers are assured, therefore, not only of the present advantages of a profitable commerce with these islands, but of bequeathing the same benefits to their posterity.

"In whatever degree (says Mr. Bosanquet*) possession is valuable, in the same degree must the continuance of that possession be advantageous. And to commerce, nationally considered, this reasoning has a particularly strong application. The employment in manufacture which commerce has encouraged, ceases with the loss of that branch of it which furnished the encouragement.—Nor is the inconvenience of the loss to be measured by the extent of inconvenience which might have ensued from the want of original possession. Population, though it readily expands, does not reduce itself to the lessened demand for labour, but through the severe medium of penury, distress, and want."

* Thoughts on Commerce and Colonies, page 33.

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The justice of these arguments is unquestionable; and no addition is wanted to give energy to the language which conveys them. We have seen that the West-India trade is equally valuable from the nature of its commodities, and from the assurance of its permanency.—Let us proceed to consider the amount of its yearly exports. If we turn to Sir William Young's record of official documents, we shall find * that our manufacturers regularly ship goods to the amount of six millions, and that our merchants, insurers, and ship-owners, derive about two millions more from the same source, making an annual return of eight millions sterling! With the exception of America, what other country buys so largely of the produce of our industry? India, proverbially a source of wealth to the various nations which have successively trafficked with it, seldom takes a half †, and in ordinary seasons not a third ‡ part of this amount. And when we consider that the immense value we have mentioned consists in goods wrought up to the last stage of manufacture, to how many hundreds of thousands must this invaluable branch of our commerce afford subsistence!

It was formerly a popular although a very erroneous notion, that national riches could not otherwise be realized than by importing them from abroad. Hence it was inferred, that foreign trade, meaning

* Page 100.

† Sir W. Young, page 101.

‡ Bosanquet on the Colonies, page 53.

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trade with countries independent of the British crown, was most profitable both to individuals and to the country. But the actual experience of merchants coincides with the dictates of reason, to prove that domestic trade is the more lucrative of the two. In domestic trade, "both ends are British *"—the collective produce of our industry centres within ourselves. The nation is both invigorated by the habit of industry, and enriched by its operation. Our intercourse with the West Indies "is foreign only in name—all the produce appertains to British subjects, and all remains in Britain †."

But, of all descriptions of traffic, that kind is assuredly most valuable to a maritime state, which adds to the profits of domestic trade the advantage of training and maintaining seamen. This brings me to the second division of this chapter, namely,

II. *The Value of the West-India Trade, as a Nursery of Seamen.*

If we consult the official documents laid before the House of Commons, we shall find, by the latest return, that the West-India trade employed, in 1804, 837 sail of shipping, (236,580 tons and 17,680 seamen ‡. We, as well as the rest of Europe, are accustomed to look upon our trade with

* Bosanquet on the Colonies, page 41.

† Ibid. ‡ Sir W. Young, page 94.

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India and China as the source no less of naval strength than of opulence; yet these countries, the riches of which have been celebrated for three thousand years, do not occupy one-half of the seamen, nor one-third of the tonnage employed in the West-India trade. Besides, the China, and even the India ships, require, for building and repair, the large oak timber necessary for ships of the line; the scarcity of which is such, that the Admiralty were, some time ago, obliged to stipulate with the Directors, that the Company should forbear building for two years.

The West-India ships are of a size particularly adapted to the training of seamen; they are sufficiently large to be used as armed ships in case of emergency; and, in their building and repairs, they require only that kind of timber which can be spared from the royal dock-yards. "The West-India navigation (says Sir William Young*) from five to eight weeks, or five months out and home, has the advantage over more distant voyages, by returning the crews, at certain periods within the year, for national service, if required."

If it be objected that the West-India climate is unfavourable to the health of our seamen, I answer, that this complaint may be entirely obviated by a stedfast adherence to a judicious arrangement of convoys. Were our fleets to sail, as they ought,

* West-India Common Place Book, page 35.

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in autumn and in winter, and to return in April, May, and July, we should hear of no sickness among their crews.

Besides, it has been customary to station permanently, a part of our navy in the West Indies. The crews of these ships are exposed to all the hazards of the climate, without the benefits which the crews of merchantmen possess, in a speedy removal to a cooler atmosphere. Can we conceive a more favourable opportunity of seasoning seamen for permanent service in that climate, than is afforded by the temporary residence of the crews of merchant-vessels? A residence sufficiently short to avoid any danger from the first visit, and sufficiently long to adapt the constitution to a second visit and a longer stay.

But the value of the West-India trade to our navigation is not to be determined by the mere number which it employs. The prospects it offers both to the officer and the seaman, induce many to go to sea who would have otherwise never embraced the profession. To enter into the West-India service, is the general object of ambition. The seaman finds there the highest wages; and he who deserves to rise above the rank of seaman will find it the field of speedy promotion.

Another, and a most important advantage of the West-India colonies is the number of seamen they

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support in our fisheries. Fish is there the principal article of food, and the consumption of herrings caught at home, and of cod caught at Newfoundland, is immense If we add these seamen to the number permanently employed in the trade, we shall not over-rate the total at 25,000.

The amount of freight, out and home, paid yearly to the ship-owners, by the West-India trade, amounts to the sum of three millions and a half*.

The East-India trade is certainly less popular, and, in the opinion of many, less advantageous to the country, by being confined to the metropolis. But the benefits of the West-India trade are diffused over every quarter of the empire. Every merchant, every ship-owner, may share in its advantages; and not only in London, but in all our principal sea-ports, the example of those engaged in it stimulates the adventurous youth to dedicate themselves to a sea life.

The opinion I have expressed of the importance of this trade to British navigation is recorded in repeated acts of the legislature. No sooner did the value of the colonies become understood (1651) than all foreign ships were prohibited † from trading to them. After the Restoration, it was enacted, that the ships trading to these colonies should not only

* See Sir William Young, pages 87 and 100.

† Sir William Young, page 132.

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be navigated by British seamen, but should likewise be British built; and it was not till 1780, that Irish shipping was admitted to this privilege.

In 1739, when the colonists complained of the monopoly, and demanded leave to export their sugar to foreign parts of Europe, the monopoly * was taken off as far as regarded the produce, but enforced in respect to the shipping—the colonists being allowed to send their produce elsewhere than to Britain, but through no other medium than that of *British-built ships, navigated according to law.* This wise concession was continued by successive acts for thirty years. And so lately as the termination of the American war, the export of all colonial produce was opened to the United States; but the same important condition was still stipulated, namely, that this export should take place only in *British ships.*

I might go on to multiply arguments, and to adduce example upon example, of the jealousy of the British legislature in regard to the exclusive possession of the West-India navigation; but what additional weight can the industry of a writer, or even the authority of the British senate, give to a cause which rests its claim for protection upon the incontrovertible fact, that the West-India colonies employ (including the fisheries) above a thousand sail of shipping, and twenty-five thousand seamen!

* Sir W. Young, page 82.

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3. *Importance of the West Indies as a source of public revenue.*

On a reference to the official returns in Sir William Young's Common-place Book (pages 86, 87, and 88), it will be found that the value of our yearly imports from the West Indies amounts, on an average, to seventeen millions sterling. Of this sum, no less than five millions are paid at once into the public treasury*. Of the remaining twelve millions, eight go in payment of the British manufactures exported†, while the other four are appropriated to the homeward freight and the mercantile charges. Since 1798, a very small proportion of this ample fund of seventeen millions has remained to the planter. If, however, he received no income, he was enabled, until lately, to pay the interest of his borrowed capital. Although he thus laboured without reward, he had the satisfaction of at least preventing the farther accumulation of his debt. But, at present, of the seventeen millions imported into this country, not a single shilling goes to those by whose industry the whole is produced. The result of the labour and of the capital of the planter is entirely paid away in duties and charges.—Of the cruelty of this unexampled situation we shall treat more at length

* Sir W. Young p. 86. The duty on sugar is three millions; that on rum one million and a half; and the lesser commodities pay the additional half million.

† Sir W. Young, page 100.

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in the next Chapter—our present object is the value of the West-India colonies, as a source of public revenue.

We have seen that they pay annually five millions of direct taxes, and twelve millions more to the navigation and manufactures of Great Britain. Now, although it will be readily felt that money cannot be more beneficially bestowed than on our navigation and manufactures, it is worth while, in this season of public burdens, to consider how large a proportion of these twelve millions finds its way into the public coffers. If we reflect on the endless ramifications of our taxes, pervading every rank, and reaching not only all the luxuries, all the comforts, but many of the necessaries of life—if we consider the rapidity with which capital is circulated, and that every exchange in this endless variety pays its tax to government, we may safely infer, that the indirect is equal to the direct contribution—that is, that out of the twelve millions paid to individuals from the West-India trade, five millions annually find their way, by various channels, into the public treasury. Whoever has attentively studied the interminable operation of our taxes, will deem this no exaggerated statement. And if any refuse their assent to the justice of this proportion, let them form to themselves an estimate of the indirect taxation on West-India imports, and, adding to this estimate the taxes (direct and indirect) on British exports to the West Indies, let them determine whether I am not justi-

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fied in asserting, that, from its various sources, the West-India trade pays TEN MILLIONS annually into the public treasury. We are accustomed to date our heaviest burdens from the commencement of our efforts to stem the torrent of the French revolution. But the amount annually paid into the public treasury by the West-India trade is equal to more than one half of all the permanent taxes imposed on Great Britain since that inauspicious æra—in other words, the taxes annually paid by the West-India trade are greater than half the interest of the whole national debt! What would be the feelings of the country if we knew that a calamity impended over us, which, if not effectually guarded against, would add two hundred millions to the amount of our national debt, and oblige us to submit to an accumulation of new burdens equal to half the permanent taxes imposed for the last fifteen years? Yet such is the alternative for which we must be prepared, if we do not speedily and effectually succour the West-India planters. They have spent the last nine years in an unavailing struggle, and their property has undergone a progressive and rapid depreciation. Hitherto the loss has been borne by the individual, but it must soon be borne by the State, for the individual can bear it no longer.

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CHAPTER I[redacted]

Present State of the West-India Trade.

ALTHOUGH the products of our West-India islands are various, the proportion of sugar is so much greater than that of all the others together, that the measure of colonial prosperity is wholly determined by the state of the sugar-market. If sales are brisk and prices favourable at home, payments are punctually made from one hand to another in the West Indies, and business is conducted with regularity and cheerfulness. But when the price of sugar is, as it has been of late years, entirely inadequate to the repayment of the planter, an universal stagnation of trade takes place. Sugar being therefore the staple commodity, I shall confine myself to it and to rum (an article strictly connected with it), without reference to the less interesting products.

In 1773, the nett proceeds of a hogshead of sugar appear to have been, on an average, £17 10 0
And in 1787 - - - - - 21 0 0
At these periods, the West-India trade continued in a state in which the operation of monopoly and of taxes was scarcely injurious to it. The demand was in proportion to the supply, the quantity pro-

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duced being, on an average, scarcely 10,000 hogsheads beyond the home consumption. Markets were thus supplied at fair prices; for £17, 10s. in 1773, and £21 in 1787, were equal at least to £32 at present. Soon after 1787, the evils of the French revolution reached St. Domingo, and the supply of that great island became lost to Europe. Sugar then rose in price, and in 1791 and 1792, the hogshead produced above £30.* In consequence of insurrections in Grenada and St. Vincent's, this high price was maintained for the following six years. But after 1798, it became evident that the quantity of sugar brought to the British market was much increased. The waste of insurrection had been repaired; new land had been cultivated, particularly in Jamaica; the Bourbon cane had become generally substituted for its less productive predecessor; but above all, the conquest of the enemy's colonies, of Martinique, Tobago, St. Lucia, Demerara, and Surinam, poured a boundless supply into our markets.

Unfortunately, in 1795 and 1798, our own Government, conceiving that we monopolized the supply of all Europe, attempted to make foreigners pay a part of the British duty, by withholding the drawback. To this mistaken policy it is in a great measure to be attributed that we do not supply a larger proportion of the continent at this day. By

* Sir William Young, page 58.

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this tax on our own sugar, encouragement was held out to foreign colonies to extend their cultivation, and the convenient medium of neutral flags was adopted for the conveyance of their produce.

The operation of these causes became apparent in 1799, when a large importation caused a general depreciation throughout the sugar market. Mr. Pitt lost no time in affording relief, and adopted, in particular, the use of sugar instead of barley, in distillation. The season at home had been extremely wet; the crop of corn was very deficient, and malt cost between 90s. and 95s.* The substitution of sugar for malt was thus doubly desirable. It was calculated to relieve the planter, by taking part of the glut out of the market, and to benefit the public by keeping down the excessive price of barley. At first, an act was passed simply to permit the use of sugar in lieu of barley, in distilleries and breweries. In the breweries its use was not found to be attended with advantage; but the case was different with the distilleries, which were soon afterwards prohibited from using grain during a certain period.†

In 1802, when the price of sugar was still lower, a scale of prices was established‡, according to which a bounty of 2s. per cwt. was allowed on sugar exported when the average price fell below 55s. and a duty of 2s. imposed on exports when the

* Minutes of the Distillery Committee, in January, 1807, page 22.

† Ibid.

‡ Sir William Young, page 42.

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average price should rise to 80s. These rates had reference to a state of peace; and it will appear in the sequel, that I have suggested the adoption of a similar measure at present, with suitable allowances for a time of war, and for the enhancement of stores since 1802.

Neither of these measures was adequate to accomplish the relief of the West-India body, but each contributed to lessen the burden. So long as the continent remained open to our trade, the prices of sugar, although unfavourable, still afforded some small return to the planter. But since the prevention of import to the continent, partly by Bonaparte's prohibitory decrees, and still more by the superior advantages of neutrals in the conveyance of produce from the colonies of our enemies, the measure of calamity to the British planter has been complete. To dwell on the importance, or rather on the indispensable necessity of this export to the nation, as well as to the planter, would be a waste of words. A single fact will illustrate it more powerfully than a volume of arguments—I mean the fact that our annual importation, including the conquered colonies, amounts on an average to - - *280,000 hhds.

While our home consumption, on the average of the last six years, was only 170,000hhds. It may now be computed †190,000

Leaving a surplus of - 190,000 hdds.

* Appendix, Report of West-India Committee, page 73. † Ibid.

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which must either be exported, or must accumulate at home.

In consequence of this very great excess of supply above the home consumption, the market price is regulated by the foreign demand. Now the price which the foreigner can afford to pay in the London market is necessarily a very low one, both because he has afterwards to pay freight and insurance from this country to his own (frequently by a circuitous route) and because he is met at his own residence by direct importations of French and Spanish sugar, through the cheap medium of neutral flags. The expense of bringing home sugar from the British colonies, and of afterwards carrying it to the continent, is 9s. per cwt. more than the conveyance of sugar, in American ships, from the French and Spanish colonies, first to the United States, and subsequently to Europe*. The continental merchant, therefore, neither can nor will buy sugar in the London market, unless prices are, as at present, in the last stage of depression. Our object, however, ought to be to induce him to purchase when prices are somewhat better, and to accomplish this, it is obvious that the interference of government is indispensable. The mode in which this interference should be exerted, shall be treated of in a following chapter.

* See the Pamphlet entitled "Concessions to America, the Bane of Britain," page 55.

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When so large an import as 280,000 hhds. is mentioned, it may occur to several persons, that the deficiency in price is in some measure made good by the abundance of the quantity, in the same way that a farmer is indemnified for low prices by a plentiful crop. But in regard to sugar, the case is quite different. The heavy duty on it forms a most important distinction between the laws which regulate the respective profits of the planter and the farmer. This duty is payable equally whether sugar be cheap or dear. It is not greatness of quantity, but of price, which withstands its destructive operation; so that however large may be the planter's crop, however he may have toiled to add hogshead to hogshead, he still finds himself, under the present circumstances, robbed of the fair recompence of his labour; for the whole proceeds of his earnings are paid away in the charges of bringing his commodity to market.

It is common to judge of the state of the sugar market by the average price of the quantity sold during the week, as published in the Saturday's Gazette. It is evident, however, that this is not at all times an accurate representation; as more fine sugars will happen to be sold in one week than another, and prices may be actually lower, without having that appearance. In general, however, the average Gazette price is a fair criterion. Some persons are in the habit of disclaiming the justice of this rule, and of even going the length of asserting that the

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Gazette price applies only to the lower kinds of sugar. Nothing can be more fallacious. The Gazette price represents not the lower sugars, but the average of all the sugars sold within a given period. So far from inducing a conclusion too favourable to the planter, it in fact makes prices appear to the public to be higher than they are. Let us suppose 3000 hogsheads sold in a week, of which 2500 fetch 28s. per cwt. and the remaining 500 fetch 43s. the average Gazette price will be 30s. 6d. although so very large a proportion was sold considerably below it. This example sufficiently proves that although a part of the sugar is sold above the average rate, a much greater quantity is sold below it; and as the charges are the same on all qualities, the hardship to the majority of the planters is far greater than the Gazette prices, wretched as they are, would seem to to indicate*.

The expenses attendant on the cultivation of sugar may be estimated as follows:—An estate of 200 negroes makes, on an average of different situations, about 150 hogsheads, of 13 cwt. nett. It is usually computed that the rum pays the expense of provisions for the negroes. But, exclusive of these provisions, and even of American stores, there are island taxes, overseers' salaries, and stores from Europe; the aggregate of which costs, over and above the proceeds of the rum, in Jamaica, 21s. and in the

* Report of Sugar Distillery Committee, p. 4.

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Leeward Islands, 20s. on the cwt. of sugar produced. As a difference of opinion may exist on this head, I have been at pains to rest this statement upon authority; and I accordingly refer to the Minutes of Evidence before the first West-India Committee, in January last year (p. 16 and 28), and to the circumstantial and accurate evidence of Mr. Wedderburne before the second West-India Committee, in July.

	s.	d.
The stores from Europe, the island taxes, and salaries, are therefore at a medium per cwt,	20	6
Freight home	10	0
Insurance and mercantile charges	6	0
Making the charges on sugar, exclusive of duty, or of any return whatever to the planter	36	6
Add the duty	27	0
Thus the charges on sugar, including the duty, but without any return to the planter, are	63	6
Add the planter's return, computed at only 8 per cent. on his capital	33	0
Total	96	6

Ninety-six shillings and sixpence per cwt. is therefore the price below which sugar cannot now be sold without injury to the planter. That the return on his capital should be, on an average, 33s. per cwt. will be apparent, when we consider that an estate of

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200 negroes must have cost to the Proprietor, in all, fully £40,000 sterling. The average crop of such an estate is not under-rated at *150 hogsheads, of 13 cwt. each, on which 33s. per cwt. is necessary to make a return of 8 per cent. on the £40,000 vested. The customary profit on the great branches of trade in this country is nearer to 10 than to 8 per cent. A smaller return than this would appear to our brewers and our farmers an inadequate payment for their hazard and their labour. And if this be a legitimate profit in so healthy a climate and so secure a country as Great Britain, how much more is it due to him who must have seasoned his constitution to a strange climate, and whose property is exposed during war to a double portion of alarm? Besides, in this country 5 per cent. is the rate of interest, whereas to a West-India planter interest is charged at 6 per cent.; and no loan can be obtained even at that, without additional stipulations to the advantage of the lender.

We have seen that 96s. 6d. per cwt. ought to be the average price of sugar, to pay all charges, and allow the planter 8 per cent. on his capital. How different has been the actual state of the market for the last nine years!

In 1799	the average price was	†75s.
1800	- - - -	74s.
1801	- - - -	64s.

* Sir W. Young, page 4. † Sir W. Young, page 48.

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1802	(peace)	54s. 5d.
1803		67s.
1804		80s.
1805		76s.
1806		68s.
1807		60s.

Now, whatever these prices are respectively short of 96s. 6d. is absolute loss to the planter, for the full amount of charges must always be paid: he has therefore not only been deprived, throughout the above period, of the moderate return of 8 per cent, on his capital, but during the seven years between 1799 and 1805 he obtained less than 4 per cent.; and during the last and present year he has received no return whatever! A planter's capital is partly his own, and partly borrowed at interest. While that which is his own is thus totally unproductive, the interest of that which he has borrowed continues to accumulate, and brings him every year deeper into debt.—During the two last years, the growers of inferior sugar have not only laboured in vain, but they have actually lost the fourth part of their capital!

The principle of all taxation is, that the duty should fall upon the consumer. The rigid observance of this principle is indispensably necessary in a branch of trade in which the grower is obliged to send his produce to a particular market. Accordingly, the language of every successive chancellor of the exchequer has been, that the duty was to be borne by

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the consumer. Yet how different has been the result! In 1798, the duty was only 19s. 4d. and the price so high as 86s. In 1803, the duty is raised to 24s. yet the price falls to 67s. And in the present year, while the duty is at the still higher rate of 27s. the price is still lower, namely, 60s. So that, by a singular and melancholy coincidence, the price, instead of rising to meet the duty, has progressively declined as the duty has advanced.

It is customary with West-India merchants to compute sugars by the proceeds of the hogshead in Britain. At the rate of 96s. 6d. per cwt. which we have shown to be indispensable to indemnify the planter, the proceeds of a hogshead, weighing 13 cwt. nett, would be, after deduction of 43s. per cwt. for British charges, - - - - - - - £84. 15s. 6d. Let us examine how far the actual state of the market has accorded with this rate. For the six years ending with 1799* the average nett value of the hogshead of sugar was - - - £32. — — During this period, stores were cheaper, and the planter might therefore be considered as making from 6 to 8 per cent. on his capital. But in the next period of six years the average nett value of the hogshead was reduced to - - £20. 7s. 2d. And in 1807 it is further reduced to the miserable sum of - - - - - - - - - - - - £11, 1s. — Yet of this £11. 1s. pitiful as it is, not one farthing

* Sir W. Young, page 50.

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goes to the planter; for it is absorbed, and more than absorbed, in the payment of stores and island taxes!

After such a statement, can we doubt the truth of Sir William Young's declaration*, that

"The business cannot long continue on such terms of partnership between government and any description of its subjects: the planter may for a time struggle to maintain his share, but must ultimately fail; and, losing its active partner, the state will have the dead and unprofitable stock on hand, of islands poorly cultivated, and of works and manufactures in decay."

It will naturally be asked, by those who learn for the first time this scene of distress, "How have these evils continued to accumulate; why has not their excess, long ere this, effected their cure?" Assuredly the pressure has been sufficient to cause a complete revolution, but the hand of monopoly has prevented its operation. No other market but the mother country is open to the colonist. If the amount of his produce exceed the amount of her consumption, the sale of his produce becomes doubtful, because it depends on the demand from a foreign market. And if, in addition to this excess above the home consumption, the foreign market become

* West-India Common-Place Book, page 42.

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shut to our exports, what can ensue but a vast accumulation of produce and complete depression of price?

But, whatever be the extent of this depression, the planter has no alternative—he can change neither the nature of his produce, nor its destination. In this country, when any branch of trade has been ruined by the progress of our enemies on the continent, or by improvident taxation at home, the persons who have vested their property in it, and devoted their time to the acquisition of this particular knowledge, find it extremely difficult to give a new direction to their capital and industry. But in the West Indies such changes are not only difficult, but impracticable. There the culture of the soil is the only important object for capital or industry, and four-fifths of the soil is appropriated to the growth of sugar. But in the growth and manufacture of sugar every thing is distinct from other occupations. The buildings and machinery—the training of the negroes—the habits of the proprietor—are all peculiar to this specific employment. "Besides," says the Report of the Committee of the Assembly of Jamaica, in 1804*, "lands long employed for raising canes are unfit for the profitable cultivation of other articles. Coffee must be established in virgin soil; and cotton will not thrive on some lands the best adapted for the growth of canes. In many places,

* Page 7.

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even grass cannot be raised on old fields worn out with the production of sugar. The cultivation of this staple once elected, must be persevered in, nor can it be reduced below a certain scale without inevitable loss.——It follows, that if you deprive the sugar-planter of the means of keeping up the produce of his estate, you doom him to destruction; for when he must give up planting canes, no alternative remains but to permit his works to go to decay, and his lands to be over-run with weeds and bushes. His negroes must be sold to a more fortunate neighbour, if, as is more usual in such cases, the sheriff be not ready to take them in execution for a debt which their utmost value is unable to satisfy."

That the West-India colonies have so long been allowed to groan under these calamities can, with difficulty be ascribed to any other reason than that government has been ignorant of their real situation. To what other cause is it possible to refer that most unexpected addition of 3s. to the duty, which was proposed in 1806? This duty was afterwards, on the earnest representation of the West-India body, made conditional, and to operate only when sugar should sell for 77s. Now we have already shown (see page 16), that 77s. is very far below the rate which constitutes a saving price to the planter. Every succeeding administration has told the West-India body, "We increase the tax on sugar, because you command the market, and because this increase

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falls on the consumer." But how can the West-India planters command the market, if they are forced to sell for 77s. what costs them 96s.? Or how can the consumer be said to pay the increased tax, when, at every successive increase, the price to the consumer has fallen? Yet, in defiance of these incontrovertible truths, is sugar taxed with 3s. additional as soon as it reaches 77s.; when, on the avowed principles of government, this tax should not have begun to operate until the price rose to 96s. The culture of sugar is certainly not of equal importance with that of corn; but, whether with reference to our national power, or to the habits and comforts of the people, sugar stands next to corn, and ranks far before all other objects of culture. Now if in any article of British produce, however inferior to sugar as a national object, a tax had been imposed, to take place when that article should sell for 77s. although it was evident that the grower could not afford it for less than 96s. would not remonstrances have been re-echoed from one end of the kingdom to the other? Yet such is the distress of the West-India body, that this hardship, grievous as it is, is scarcely mentioned, for it is lost amidst a crowd of greater evils.

It would be an obvious waste of argument to show the great rise in the price of almost every commodity in this country during the last fifteen years of war and taxes. And, it will be readily admitted, that he who, like the West-India planter,

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manufactures nothing at home, but pays the price of finished workmanship on every article, must have suffered beyond others in the general enhancement. In Great Britain, the progressive rise of income has nearly kept pace with the rise of prices. The rent of land, and the wages of labour, have increased at least one-third since the beginning of the last war. But, in the West Indies, while the cost of every requisite article has been doubled, the fund for the purchase of these articles has been, for nine years, in a course of rapid depreciation!

It will naturally be asked, how it has been possible that the West-India planters should continue to exist under the destructive operation of these accumulated evils? Certainly, no other branch of trade could have supported a similar pressure; and, great as the misery now is in the colonies, the wonder is, that they should not, ere now, have been involved in utter ruin. It is to be considered however, that the properties of the British West-India planters are not acquisitions of recent date. Many of them exhibit the gradual result of the industry of a hundred years. It would be difficult to compute the extent of British capital which has been applied, at different times, to the cultivation of the West Indies; but the expensive nature of a sugar estate is, of itself, a demonstration that the original settler must have had a capital, either in property or in loan. To the intrinsic value of the land there were superadded the fruits of the labour of several

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successive generations. West-India properties accordingly became, in course of time, highly valuable. This value was in no respect the result of a fortunate combination of accidents; for the idea of making a rapid fortune in the West Indies exists only in the imagination of the youthful adventurer, who has never visited them—this value was the legitimate recompence of persevering exertion.—Without, therefore, having ever been the scene of immoderate profits to the planters, these colonies presented, ten years ago, a numerous and opulent body of proprietors, whose estates were a record of the industry of their ancestors. The merchants at home formed a body equally respectable. The British West-India merchant is properly the agent only of the planters, and seldom was himself the proprietor of West-India estates. But this agency requires a large capital, and every house of extensive business must either originally have possessed, or subsequently acquired, the command of money. This acquisition, in some instances, arose from a gradual accumulation of profits, but much oftener from investing in the West-India trade fortunes brought from India, or realized at home. The magnitude of the capital required to conduct a West-India business would appear incredible to those who are unacquainted with it, and form their ideas from other branches of trade. All these circumstances concur to prove the former opulence of the West-India body, and to explain how they have been enabled to endure the unparalleled pressure of late years. Notwithstand-

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ing, however, all the aids of industrious habits, and of extensive capital, the West Indies are at present filled with melancholy scenes. The young planter, who, ten years ago, undertook, with the fairest prospects, the improvement of an estate, has wasted his time and his labour in a fruitless struggle. The established planter, who inherited a valuable patrimony, sees it waste away in progressive decay. The merchant in Britain, after straining every nerve to relieve his correspondents, and after lending sum after sum to redeem a previous advance (already enormous), finds that the time is now come when he can continue to advance no longer, and must leave his fortune to its fate.

Observations on the Price of Rum.

Of the whole quantity of rum made in our West-India colonies, only one-third part is sent to Britain*. An equal or rather larger quantity is bartered with the Americans, in exchange for provisions and lumber; and the remainder is consumed in the West Indies, amongst the inhabitants and on board the shipping.

The depreciation of rum has been nearly equal to that of sugar, the proceeds of a puncheon being at

* Sir W. Young, p. 64.

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present only one-third of what they were some years ago*. Notwithstanding this melancholy fact, it is but very lately that Government has extended a protecting hand to the produce of our own Colonies against the produce of France in the consumption of our navy. In 1805, only 250,000 gallons of rum were bought by the Victualling-Office, while the quantity of brandy purchased amounted to no less than 625,000 gallons.† Now, independently of the preference due to our own Colonies, it is evident that the expense of the conveyance of rum from so distant a quarter as the West Indies, at war freight and insurance, must much exceed the expense of bringing brandy from Bourdeaux through the cheap medium of neutral flags. Accordingly, the duties on brandy for private use have lately been raised so as effectually to counterbalance the advantage of its easy conveyance. But as no duties are payable on what is used by Government, the planter reaped no advantage from this circumstance in the competition for the supply of the navy. On an urgent representation, however, from the West-India merchants, the Victualling-Office has been directed to take rum in preference, provided it be tendered within one shilling per gallon of the price of brandy.

There is great fear, however, that the intention of this politic measure will be defeated by the inadequacy of the allowance. One shilling per gallon is not equal

* Sir W. Young, page 64. † Concessions to America, p. 11.

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to the difference of expence in bringing brandy and rum to market; and even were it equal, a further protection in the peculiar circumstances of this case, is still due to British produce. Of how little consequence is it to the country, whether the sum annually expended by the Victualling Board be £20,000, more or less; and of how great consequence is it, both to the country and to Government, that the West India planter should not be ruined! The object of Government should therefore be, to fix such a difference as shall afford a decided protection to rum over brandy. Perhaps the limitation of a shilling per gallon, has been dictated by an apprehension on the part of Government, that if the preference were greater, the rum merchants might combine to raise the terms of their tenders. The man of business who knows the impossibility of these combinations, in so extensive a field of commerce as Great Britain, will not of himself suspect that Government could give credit to the reality of their existence. But he will soon think otherwise, when he has perused the questions which are put to mercantile men in their examinations before Committees of our Legislature. In referring to the minutes of the Distillery Committee,* in January last, at a time when the West India Docks were loaded with above 80,000 hogsheads of sugar, he will find it asked of Mr. Craven, an eminent sugar refiner,

Whether the holders of sugar, are withholding it from the market?

* Page 12.

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Answer. Certainly not; they hold it merely because they cannot sell it.

Again in the next page, we read in the questions to Mr. Cole and Mr. Kemble;

Ques. Do you conceive the sugars are withheld from the market?

Ans. By no means, I can vouch for that; if we had been able to sell any, we should have done it.

It is fair to conclude, that the Chairman put such questions as these, more from a deference to popular prejudice than from the result of any impression on his own mind. Little indeed must he know of the state of the sugar market, who conceives that any combination either does or can take place among the West-India Merchants. Their number is too great to admit of it, and it is much less their interest than superficial observers may imagine. In nine cases out of ten, the merchant is not the proprietor of the sugar he sells; his only object is to obtain the fair market price for his friend in the West-Indies, and to earn his own commission by doing justice to the interest of that friend. The planter is almost always in want of quick returns. Sugar is of no value to the merchant, except as the means of meeting the planter's wants—he converts it accordingly into money, as soon as he can do it without any improper sacrifice; and no man was ever known to keep sugar and refuse money when satisfied that the price offered was a fair one.

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Exactly the same reasoning applies to rum. As to Government contracts, we may be assured that while they continue to be paid for in so short a time as ninety days, they will be served at the smallest possible profit; and that no man who is able to supply rum, will be withheld from tendering it on the very lowest terms at which he can afford it.

The consumption of rum in the Navy is important, because the Navy is of itself extensive. But it is still more important as conducive to promote the use of rum in preference to brandy in the wide sphere, throughout which the example of our Navy would gradually diffuse this preference.

The encouragement we have demanded for rum on the score of national profit is sanctioned by the yet more important consideration of national health. Our rum is mellowed by its long passage, and is now generally admitted to be the most wholesome of spirits. The Revenue also would gain largely by the substitution of rum for home made spirits, because the smuggling which is said to take place in regard to the latter, is impracticable in respect to the former.

Let us briefly compare the respective advantages to the country of a voyage to import rum, and of one to import brandy.

The importer of brandy charters a neutral vessel, which proceeds with simulated papers to Bordeaux

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or Charente. She sails in ballast; for if a single article of British produce or manufacture were found on board on her arrival in France, the ship and cargo would be confiscated. She takes in her cargo and returns to Britain. The shipper of the cargo draws bills on the British merchant for its amount, and the master receives his freight in London, and remits it in a bill of exchange to his owners on the Continent. Let the reader judge in what degree the British manufacturer is benefited by this transaction. How differently is the national interest affected by a voyage to the West Indies for rum! In this case the ship, the seamen, and the owners are British. Their outward cargo consists of British manufactures, and the rum and sugar with which they return loaded, are also British. The planter abroad, the merchant, the manufacturer, the ship-owner at home, and above all the hardy seaman, respectively share the profits of this intercourse. Why should I waste words in expatiating on these indisputable advantages? The difficulty is not to convince the country of their extent, but to account for that insensibility to their value, which appear so long to have actuated Government. Who will maintain, that the trifling difference of thirteen pence a gallon, ought to induce us to turn our back on our own Colonies, and give the supply of our Navy to France?

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CHAPTER III.

Consequences of the Ruin of the British West Indies.

ON so painful a part of my subject as this I shall endeavour to be brief.

The papers subjoined in the Appendix present a view of the misery of the West-Indies, on which I presume that it would ill correspond with the feelings of my readers, to enlarge. Instead therefore of aggravating the melancholy picture, I shall confine myself to the consideration of the effects which such a combination of circumstances is calculated to produce.

I have already stated (see page 24,) that for the first seven years after 1798, the planter with all his exertions obtained only a small return on his capital; and that during the last two years he has obtained no return whatever.* Nay, while sugar continues as at present, at an average of 60*s.*, the grower of inferior sugar sacrifices not only the interest of his capital, and the labour of himself and

* See an Account Sale of Sugar at present prices in the Appendix.

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his people, but loses besides every year above 12 per Cent. of his capital. For it has been shewn (page 22,) that exclusive of profits, the actual cost of sugar, whether coarse or fine, is to the planter himself, 63*s.* 6*d.* per cwt.* And when the average price is 60*s.*, it is but right to infer, that the lower kinds do not fetch above 55*s.*;† so that in the present miserable state of the market, the grower of the inferior kinds of sugar, sells it not only at prime cost, but at 8*s.* 6*d.* per cwt., or a penny a pound less than prime cost!

It is manifest that no industry, and no capital, can long withstand such a complication of evils. In the case of mortgaged estates, the mortgagees, despairing of recovering their loans from a debtor whose means of payment are entirely suspended, will carry into general execution those severe measures which they have already in various instances begun to enforce. The mortgages will be foreclosed, the property sold by public auction, at a price probably far below the claims of the principal creditor, and the unhappy planter driven from his home;—from that home which had long been the scene of his happiness, and the fond object of his persevering industry.

The Report of the Committee of the House of

* Report of Sugar Distillery Committee, page 4.

† Ibid.

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Assembly in Jamaica, thus describes (page 30) the situation of the planter in 1805, when it had not yet become so disastrous as it now is. "Every British merchant holding securities on real estates, is filing bills in chancery to foreclose, although when he has obtained a decree, he hesitates to enforce it, because he must himself become proprietor of the plantation, of which, from fatal experience, he knows the consequences.—No one will advance money to relieve those whose debts approach half the value of their property; nor even lend moderate sums without a judgment in ejectment and release of errors, that at a moment's notice he may take out a writ of possession, and enter on the plantation of his unfortunate debtor. Sheriff's officers, and collectors of the internal taxes, are every where offering for sale the property of individuals, who have seen better days, and now must view their effects purchased for half their real value, and less than half the original cost.—All kind of credit is at an end.—Unless speedy and efficacious means are adopted for giving permanent relief, by a radical change of measures, we must suppose that the West-India islands are doomed to perish as useless appendages of the British empire.—Can the colonies perish alone? Will not the statesman, whose measures shall complete their ruin, precipitate into the same abyss the manufactures and commerce of the parent State?"

Let those who are callous to individual misery contemplate the extent of the national loss. The

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man whose prospects are thus blasted, either falls a prey to despair, or seeks a better fortune in the colonies of our enemies. In either case, he is lost to his country. And who is the man whom we thus lose? Is he an unproductive member of the commonwealth? No; he is the cultivator of the soil, the most valuable to the commonwealth of all pursuits. Has he passed a life of ease and acquired property without exertion? No; he has earned it by the sweat of his brow.—Season after season has brought him a renewal of labour. Is he absorbed in selfish pursuits and enervated by the love of gain? No; the man whom you ruin and drive into exile, combines the courage of the soldier with the diligence of the merchant. He is a standing volunteer in the service of his country,—he has borne arms, not merely for a single summer of threatened invasion, but throughout a long period of anxiety and alarm.

In choosing an asylum in a foreign colony, the first consideration with the unhappy planter will be to withdraw himself as far as possible from the influence of Britain. He will shun that government to whose cruel impolicy he ascribes all his disasters. He would go to Demarara or Surinam; but Demarara and Surinam, he will say, are open to conquest by the British, and a second emigration would be the consequence. He will seek security therefore from the arms of his countrymen, on the Spanish main, in Cuba, or under the fortifications of Martinique

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and Guadaloupe. The planter, whose property has been sold by public auction, can transport only himself; but his skill and activity are not only lost to his country, but gained to her enemies. The removal of negroes will be a no less serious calamity. He who still possesses in a British colony, a mixed property of land and negroes, will sell his land, or, if, as is likely under present circumstances, there is no one to buy it, he will abandon it; but his negroes he will retain, and carry into banishment along with himself. They were once the attendants of his prosperity; they are now his companions in adversity. From their labour he once hoped to obtain a competent fortune; but the hope is fled, and he now seeks from their labour only a subsistence for them and for himself.

If we turn our eyes from the colonies to the mother country, the scene of distress will be scarcely less affecting. The West-India Merchants, who have so long ranked foremost in the commercial interest of Great Britain, will be stripped of their fortunes, and forced to exchange the prospects of honourable ambition for obscurity. The man who distributed employment and wealth to hundreds of assiduous tradesmen, who gladdened the face of industry around him, must withdraw from the scene which owed its prosperity to himself. Who will replace to the manufacturers an annual blank of six millions* in the amount of

* See page 6 of this work.

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their exports? Can the skill of our financiers make good a sudden deficiency of five millions in direct, and five millions of indirect revenue?* What will become of a thousand sail of shipping, and of twenty-five thousand seamen?† The owners of that shipping may sell them to the French, and the seamen may earn a livelihood in the employment of America, but is such a loss a matter of indifference to Britain?

Many gentlemen of landed property are said to consider their own interests as unconnected with those of our colonies. But can any proposition be clearer, than that the loss of the revenue hitherto paid by the West-Indies must be made good by the landed interest, who alone will be able to supply the deficiency? The load will be heavy, but who else can bear it? If some are disposed to think that the landed proprietor can ward off this new burden, by what other means, let me ask, can the interest of our national debt be paid, or a force adequate to the defence of the country be maintained? An inadequate establishment will expose you to foreign conquest; a breach of faith with the public creditor will lead to domestic insurrection, to the horrors of a revolution. In either case, what will be the fate of landed property? Can it be hidden from public observation, or sold in the hour of distress, and its value remitted to a foreign country? On the con-

* Page 13.
† Page 10.

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trary, of all properties, land is the most open to seizure. It is the first to attract the cupidity of the invader,—it is the only kind of possession which cannot in some degree be screened from his violence. Will Bonaparte, or his conscientious subordinate, Massena, stop to enquire the validity of title deeds; or does it appear from the example of France, that domestic insurrection respects hereditary right?—But I will suspend the painful anticipation. Enough has been said to prove that the colonies are on the brink of ruin, and that the fate of the mother country is involved in theirs.

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CHAPTER IV.

On the means of relieving the West India Colonies.

THE principal expedients which have been suggested for the relief of the West-Indies are the following:

1. *The substitution of sugar for grain in the breweries and distilleries.*
2. *The interruption of the export of sugar from the enemy's colonies to America, and thence to Europe in neutral ships.*
3. *The diminution of the duty on sugar for home consumption, or a bounty on exportation.*
4. *The suspension of the monopoly, by which our planters are at present obliged to send their whole produce to this country; and the permission to sell their sugars to foreigners in the islands.*

I shall first consider the expediency of substituting sugar for grain in the distilleries and breweries.

The Report of the Committee appointed to inquire into this subject in January last, discouraged the idea

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of using sugar in the breweries, and even in the distilleries, under the present plan of collecting the revenue. It concluded, however, with expressing * "a wish, that such steps may be taken, as may tend to remove this barrier, in case at any future time circumstances of imperious necessity, may make a measure similar to that which has been the subject of the Committee's consideration, fit and proper to be adopted." No one will deny that "these circumstances of imperious necessity" already exist, and call loudly for redress.

The glut in the sugar market consists almost always in low sugars. The cause of this is, that in refining, the low sugars leave a large quantity of molasses, for which the refiner can obtain no adequate price. † He prefers therefore, to buy sugar of fine quality; but if molasses could be introduced into the breweries and distilleries, the consequent increase in the price of molasses would be an inducement to the refiner to take the low qualities of sugar out of the market. Molasses, it appears, is a better article than sugar for the manufacture of beer, whether to mix with grain, or to use by itself; because the process of fire, to which the molasses has been subjected, makes the extract from it sounder than from sugar. The beer made from molasses is inferior to that made from malt; but the grand obstacle to the introduction

* Report, page 8.

† Evidence before the Distillery Committee, page 14.

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of sugar into the breweries is on the part of the revenue.

In regard to the distilleries, however, the objections which exist on the part of the revenue, are by no means so serious. Mr. Jackson, of the Board of Excise, says explicitly,* that these objections are "very few, provided the distillation from sugar, be confined to those persons who have distilled from malt within the last year." In the sequel of his evidence, he expresses an opinion, that the use of sugar would not be advisable in Ireland and Scotland; and that if grain was prohibited in the English distilleries only, it would be necessary to prevent the English distiller from suffering by the importation of corn spirits from Scotland or Ireland. These objections, however, may be removed by particular regulations. Mr. Benwell, an eminent distiller, declares, † that the buildings and machinery for distillation from sugar, would be much less expensive than those requisite in using corn. At present the excise duty on the wash is higher in the case of sugar than of corn; but during the time that both were used in the distilleries, (1799,) the duty was the same, and no material injury to the revenue appears to have ensued. ‡

The English distilleries consume annually about

* Evidence Distillery Committee, page 17.
† Ibid. page 27.
‡ Ibid. page 22.

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150,000 quarters of barley; and were they confined to the use of sugar, their annual consumption of it would exceed twenty thousand hogsheads. The distiller would not purchase the lower qualities; but good brown sugars, such as sold in 1799 at * 70*s*, and at present would fetch 60*s*.

It appears of the greatest importance that no time should be lost in following up the recommendation of the Distillery Committee, by removing whatever obstacles may exist on the part of the Excise laws, to the introduction of sugar into the distilleries. In 1799, under less alarming circumstances, Mr. Pitt lost no time in carrying this measure into effect; and the whole evidence before the late Committee does not contain a single complaint of the adoption of this decisive step. At present, were the price of malt to rise suddenly, during the prorogation of parliament, it does not appear that Government are prepared, even in such an event, to introduce sugar into the distilleries in its stead. The best policy would be that the competition between malt and sugar were at all times equal. To this it may be objected that the use of sugar in the distilleries, along with grain, is incompatible with the safe collection of the revenue; and that either one or other must be excluded by law.—In that case, why continue, as you do at present, to exclude sugar, when

* Evidence before the Distillery Committee, page 25.
§ Ibid. page 19.

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barley fetches a fair price, and when sugar sells below prime cost?

If the landed interest are averse to any permanent law in favour of the use of sugar in the distillery, let them grant at least a temporary relief. The West Indian demands no continued preference—he calls for aid only in the hour of his adversity. He will relinquish his claim when sugar shall have risen to a fair price; or he will relinquish it, were barley, from whatever cause, to fall to that rate, which may place the profits of the farmer and the planter on an equal footing.

But, if the landholder considers the prohibition of distillation from malt as detrimental to his interest, let him procure the repeal of the law which limits the exportation of provisions to the West Indies. The intention of this law is to keep down the price of provisions at home; and its abrogation cannot be demanded by the landed interest, unless that demand be accompanied by a concession on their part. The patriotic colonist will gladly receive from his fellow-subjects, that supply which he now obtains from America. To adopt the words of the author of a work, to which I have already alluded *. "Surely a regulation which would at once attain all these objects, is highly desirable; and as it would

* Concessions to America, page 20.

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not throw corn out of consumption, as is generally supposed, but merely throw the consumption of it into a new channel, and establish an additional intercourse mutually advantageous between the West India colonies and the mother country, it is well worthy the serious attention of the legislature. When it is further recollected, that during the thirteen years ending in 1804, Great Britain, according to documents laid before parliament, paid more than thirty millions of money for foreign corn; her supply of which now depends on her enemy, who holds those countries under his controul from which four-fifths of it were received,* it becomes expedient as a measure of general policy, independent of any particular consideration due to the interests of the West India Planter, to use timely precaution against that deficiency of this indispensable necessary of life, which judging of the future by the past, we must expect again to experience."

II. *The next expedient proposed for the relief of our West-India Colonies, is to interrupt the intercourse at present carried on with Europe, by the French and Spanish Colonies, through the medium of neutral flags.*

The French colonial laws, like our's, restrict the trade of their colonies to the mother country. So far back as 1717, the exportation of the produce of the

* See Appendix D.

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French West-India islands, elsewhere than to France, was positively prohibited, or to use their own language, *très expressément defendu.** All the subsequent regulations during the old monarchy, were to the same effect. And even in the zenith of revolutionary enthusiasm, the national Convention passed an Act, dated 21st of September, 1793, "confirming these restrictive laws in all their tenor."† Soon after this Act, the French West-India colonies were taken possession of by us, but no sooner were they restored by the peace of Amiens, than the monopoly was again rigorously enforced, by a decree dated 16th of May, 1802. In a twelvemonth afterwards the war was renewed. France was then in possession of her colonies; but she had no means of monopolizing their commerce. England covered the seas with her ships, while not a single French vessel durst appear on the ocean. Talleyrand, more profound than his republican predecessors, suggested to his master the policy of permitting America to carry on that traffic with the colonies, of which France was incapable. His advice was immediately adopted, and sanctioned by a decree of the 19th of June, 1803. Never was there a bargain more advantageous to both contracting parties. The West-Indies afford America a market for her corn, her flour, her beef, her fish, her lumber. They repay these stores in sugar, coffee, rum, and other articles, the produce

* Concessions to America, page 26.

† Ibid. page 26.

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of a tropical climate. All the importations of America from the West-Indies are useful for foreign trade, or domestic consumption; and none of them interfere with the produce of her own soil. The advantages to France were still more conspicuous. Unable herself to send out stores for the cultivation of her colonies, it was important that she should find another country to undertake the supply. The accommodation was doubled, if this power could also bring home the produce to the mother country.

The injury which would be caused to the British colonies, by the cheap conveyance of French and Spanish produce to the European market, could not escape the penetrating mind of Talleyrand. All that the French government could have predicted or have hoped, has followed from this measure. Their own colonies are cultivated and improved by American stores; the same vessels carry back their produce to America, whence it is shipped to Europe; France and her dependencies are supplied with as much ease as if they were at peace; and what is infinitely more pernicious to us, the produce of the British colonies is excluded from the Continent by the cheapness of the produce of our enemies,—a cheapness caused by its conveyance under neutral flags, which cross the ocean at peace charges, while our own navigation is subject to all the burdens of war.

Of the extent to which the American traffic with Europe, in the produce of the French and Spanish

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colonies, is carried, some idea may be formed by the following facts. Last year, 211 sail of American vessels entered the port of Amsterdam alone with cargoes amounting to 34,000 hogsheads of coffee, and 45,000 hogsheads of sugar.* It has been acknowledged in the Senate of the United States, that the amount of West India produce annually re-exported, was seven millions sterling.† The probability is, that it much exceeds this sum, for it would appear from their official returns, that the proportion of West India produce exported by their three great maritime States alone, (Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania,) scarcely falls short of the amount assigned to the whole.‡ No wonder that the produce of the British colonies imported under all the disadvantages of war, should be unable to face so formidable a competition in the Continental markets.

The author of the Inquiry into the State of the Nation, has endeavoured to show the impolicy of interrupting this trade, but before proceeding to maintain that side of the question, he gives a statement of the arguments alledged in favour of its interruption. This statement is as follows.

"It is in vain, (the supporters§ of the belligerent rights contend,) that England conquers the French

* Report of the West-India Committee in July, 1807, page 14.

† Concessions to America, page 8.

‡ Ibid. page 39.

§ Inquiry into the State of the Nation, page 182.

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marine, nay, reduces it almost to annihilation. Her ships of war may be captured, but the commerce of France is safe. She may declare war when she pleases; and without a ship that can make head to our weakest cruiser, she has a sure method of at once protecting her whole trade, more certainly than if she had the entire command of the seas. She has but to suspend her navigation law, to admit the Americans into her colonial and coasting trade, and to fit out no vessel for sea under French colours. The English cruisers may domineer over the seas, and yet they are unable to touch a ton of her trade. She has millions floating on the vessels of other nations which no enemy can reach. She reaps the whole benefit of commerce and colonies, without the risks of capture or detention. She unites the whole benefits of war with all the security of peace. The rule, it is contended, which should guide us in this question, as the fairest measure of justice to all parties, is that neutrals can only take part during war, in such branches of commerce as the domestic regulations of the belligerent allowed them to partake in during peace. This doctrine was recognized, we are told, in the war of 1756, and has never since been disputed, though England has frequently departed from its rigour by voluntary concession. Its policy is as obvious, as its justice, say the enemies of the neutral claims. Were the present principle of unlimited neutral trade to be recognized, England might give over every pretension to naval power, abandon the hope of curbing French commerce, and

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despair at once of gaining any thing by a continuance even of the justest war.—Better have America, as well as France, hostile and exposed to our fair attacks, than France openly hostile, and America covertly protecting her from every effort of our enmity."

Such is the substance of the arguments in favour of the interruption of this new species of traffic. A statement of these arguments, even from the pen of an adversary, creates an impression which it is very difficult to remove. This author has confined himself strictly to the question of *policy*, omitting altogether the consideration of *right*. How far it may be politic to hazard a war with America, for the sake of injuring our enemy's colonies and benefiting our own, is a question to be decided, not by an individual, but by Government. But the author of the Inquiry into the State of the Nation argues, that "whatever right England may have to prevent the interference of America in the French colonial trade during war, *no material advantage* could be gained from the enforcement of such a prohibition; and that the real difference between the former and the present mode of carrying French colonial produce, and supplying the French colonies, is *extremely trifling in* its ultimate consequences." Now upon these grounds, the author of this Inquiry has entirely failed to make good his arguments. He proceeds upon assumptions, the fallacy of which must be as obvious to the political economist, as to the man of business; and he has in vain exerted his ingenuity through twenty pages

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to refute the simple truths which he had stated in two.

"He has made (says the author of Concessions to America,*) the most of his materials; but he has laboured for Egyptian task masters, who required him to make bricks without straw. His flowing stile, and well turned periods, may amuse the ear; but those who think as well as read, who adopt no conclusions without examining the premises from whence they are drawn, will soon detect the fallacy and weakness of his arguments." These arguments indeed I consider to be answered by one unfortunate fact,—the exclusion of our produce from the ports of Europe in consequence of this traffic. It appears to me therefore unnecessary to combat them any farther, especially as the reader, who is desirous to see them particularly investigated, may be gratified by a reference to the pamphlet I have quoted.† I cannot, however, avoid noticing a singular assertion in the Inquiry into the State of the Nation. The author endeavours to persuade us, that the continuance of the American trade with the French colonies is advantageous, because‡ "while neutral ships and seamen alone are employed in carrying on the commerce of France, her only nursery of maritime power is destroyed; she loses her whole chance of gaining a navy." Granted,—but the extinction of the French marine was effected

* Page 27.

† Concessions to America, p. 28.

‡ Inquiry, p. 196.

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long before the Americans undertook the traffic of the French West-Indies. So long ago as the 14th January, 1799, the Directory declared in a message to the Council of Five Hundred, that "it is unhappily too true, that there is not a single merchantman trading under French colours." Now in the year 1799, Martinique was in our possession, and the American intercourse with the French islands did not become considerable till four years after. Of course whatever weight there may be in the general proposition, that the encouragement of neutral shipping is subversive of national marine, the ruin of the French Marine cannot be at all ascribed to the American intercourse with the French West-Indies, because the French shipping was avowedly annihilated before this intercourse began.

During Mr. Pitt's administration in 1805, an intention was manifested to discontinue the indulgence shewn to this traffic in the two preceding years. The most conspicuous proof of this occurred in the case of the Essex, an American vessel, which had carried produce from an enemy's colony to America; and after landing that produce in America, had re-shipped and was carrying it to Europe, when she was detained by a British cruizer, and sent to New Providence. The Vice-Admiralty court there, condemned both ship and cargo, on the plea that the voyage was continuous; and this sentence was confirmed at home by the Lords Commissioners of Appeal.

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In consequence of this, and other captures, Mr. Monroe, the American Minister, addressed a long letter of remonstrance, (dated 23d of September, 1805,) to the British Government. This letter was afterwards published by order of Congress, and may be considered a kind of Manifesto on their side of the question. In this letter Mr. Monroe says,

"The separation of one portion of territory from another by the sea, gives lawfully to the belligerent who is superior on that element, a vast ascendancy in all the concerns in which the success of the war, or the relative prosperity of their respective dominions, may in any degree depend. It opens to such power ample means for its own aggrandizement; and for the harassment and distress of its adversary. With these it should be satisfied."

Such, indeed, ought to be the legitimate consequences of maritime superiority; and such was in former wars the prerogative of Britain. But this prerogative, which Mr. Monroe so liberally ascribes to us, we now by no means possess; for if the commerce of our enemies be conducted in defiance of us in neutral bottoms, in what way, to use his own words, does the "vast ascendancy of our lawful superiority," operate in our favour? If by these means, the intercourse between the French colonies and the mother country is carried on in war, with the same facility as in peace, in what way does "this lawful superiority, this vast ascendancy, open

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ample means of harassment and distress to our adversary?" And further, if by this permission on our part, the produce of our enemies excludes our's from the Continental markets, to the ruin of our planters, in what way can we be said to possess, (to use again Mr. Monroe's own words,) "this vast ascendancy in all the concerns, on which the relative prosperity of the respective dominions (of the belligerents,) may in any degree depend." Read a letter subjoined to this work,* and say whether this "relative superiority" is possessed by the French or the British colonies.

In short, while our West-India islands continue under the present system, their competition with the enemy's islands, supported by all the advantages of neutrality, is a hopeless struggle. America, in assuming the colonial trade of France during war, does more harm to the British West-Indies, than if she assailed their navigation by a hundred privateers. The letter of the compact between her and France is neutral; but its operation to us is decidedly hostile.

Had our conduct towards neutral powers been influenced by the example of France, we should long ago have put a stop to this intercourse. By Buonaparte's last prohibition, all neutrals bound to or from Great Britain, are liable to confiscation. Not only British manufactures and colonial property are

* Appendix, C.

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declared lawful prize, when found on board neutrals; but the same fate is shared by property strictly neutral. What avails it, that the execution of this decree is suspended in favour of American ships? This suspension is clearly dictated by a dread, lest we should in like manner, disregard the neutrality of America. The prohibition shews, that no consideration of justice will restrain our enemy, but the exemption shews, that interest makes him do what justice cannot. No delicacy is due to so perfidious an adversary; and did the question of the neutral intercourse regard France alone, it would quickly be decided.

But unfortunately the question does not regard France alone.—America considers both her interest and her honour deeply involved in the maintenance of this trade. The Evidence subjoined to the Report of the West-India Committee, delivered to the House of Commons on the 24th of July, affords ample information in regard to the consequences of a rupture with America. It contains in particular, the opinions of several eminent merchants in respect to the means of supplying the deficiency of provisions, which might be felt in the West-Indies in the event of such a rupture. After so comprehensive a view of the subject, it would be superfluous to renew the inquiry in this place. The information in question is before Ministers, to whom alone it belongs to decide on affairs of such magnitude.

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It is important, however, in regard to the decision of the American question, as well as for the internal regulation of our own colonies, to make Government aware that things cannot long continue on their present footing. The permission of American intercourse with our enemy's islands, is incompatible with the enforcement of a strict monopoly towards our own. To be convinced of this, we have only to recollect the fact, that while the foreign colonies are at liberty to give every kind of produce in exchange for what they want, the British planters are allowed to give only rum and molasses. They are accordingly obliged to pay a *double value, in the way of barter, for whatever they procure; and as the consumption of rum and molasses in the American market is necessarily limited, it often happens that the planter is unable to induce the American shipmaster to take these articles even at half price. The planter, in that case, must submit to the ruinous alternative of wanting the stores, unless he has the means of paying for them in specie. But what becomes of this specie in the hands of the neutral shipmaster? He goes with it to Guadaloupe or Martinique, where he buys French produce. This produce is afterwards sent to Europe, and tends to exclude the British planter from the Continental market by the appropriation of his own money!

* Concessions to America, page 8, and the evidence before the West-India Committee throughout.

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III. *On the diminution of the duty on the home consumption of sugar, or increase of the bounty on exportation.*

Of these two expedients, I am inclined to think, that an increase of the bounty would be by far the more effectual. The evil of the duty on home consumption, does not consist in its amount, but in the unfortunate circumstance, that the demand for sugar being unequal to the supply, the payment of the duty falls wholly on the planter. A twelvemonth ago, it was a general opinion, that if the duty were lessened, the home consumption would rapidly increase; but prices have since of themselves fallen far below what was proposed by this regulation, and the increase has not been rapid. The reason is obvious—sugar has become a necessary of life, and its consumption, like that of bread, is regulated not by its price, but by the wants of the consumers. Lowness of price therefore increases our sales chiefly to foreigners, who will buy more sugars, if shipped free on board at 30*s.* than at 40*s.* This is partly owing to the bounty which has been given since 1802 on exports, when the average Gazette price was below 35*s.*,* but more to the circumstance, that a price so extremely low, is far beneath prime cost. It is consequently less than the Americans can afford to take for the produce of the French and Spanish colonies, notwithstanding the comparative cheapness of their conveyance.

* These prices are exclusive of duty.

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In 1802, when the market was overstocked, and prices were extremely low, the following scale of bounty and taxation was adopted by Government.

On raw sugar exported, when the Gazette price, (exclusive of duty) was at, or below 35*s.* per cwt. a bounty was allowed of ..... 2*s.*
between 35 & 40*s.* 1
between 40 & 58 .. { no bounty but the whole duty drawn back.
between 58 & 60 .. { the drawback was partly retained by government, say..... 2*s.*
between 60 & 62..... 4
between 62 & 64..... 6
between 64 & 66..... 8
between 66 & 68..... 10
between 68 & 70..... 12
and above .... 70..... wholly retained.

These prices were calculated on the peace charges; and it is surprising that no alteration should have been made in them since the recommencement of war, although it is well known, that war causes a great and immediate increase of expence to the planter. In the homeward freight and insurance alone, the additional expence is nearly five shillings a cwt.,* and if we make allowance for the enhancement of stores,† and for the want of the various facilities of a state of peace, we shall not overrate the total additional charge to the

* Mr. Wedderburn's evidence, West-India Report, page 19.
† West-India Report, page 2.

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planter since 1802 at ten shillings a cwt. The West India body are therefore justified in calling upon Government to new-model the scale of bounty and taxation on sugar, by applying the rule of 1802, to the altered circumstances of the present period. In pursuance of this rule, and in consideration of the fact, that the charges on bringing sugar to market are enhanced 10*s.* per cwt. since 1802, they are entitled to claim the bounty of 2*s.* on export, so long as the average price (exclusive of duty) shall continue below 45*s.* Following up the same proportion through the different rates fixed in the scale, we should, advance each successive rate by ten shillings. This would be no new grant; it would only be a *new application* of an acknowledged principle;—an application so reasonable in itself, and so consonant to that principle, that it is unaccountable how it should have been so long overlooked. If it be true upon the principle of 1802, that 45*s.* exduty during war is so low a price as to require the aid of 2*s.* bounty, it is no less true that when the market is below 45*s.*, such aid should be administered as will raise it to that price. Of the mode of affording this aid, we shall treat more fully by and bye—my present object was to establish the point, that 45*s.* is now the *minimum* as 35*s.* was in 1802.

It is proper to notice the coincidence between the opinion I have deduced from the rule of 1802, and the sentiments of the Committee of the House of Assembly of Jamaica in 1805.

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" We at least hope, (page 27) that the maximum will be greatly extended, and submit that common justice requires our being allowed the reciprocal benefit of a moderate bounty on exportation, whilst the average price is at, or under 45*s.*, when most estates must be carried on at a loss, and whatever the Treasury exacts, will be not merely from the revenue, but out of the actual capital of the planter, in violation of the clearest right, and in opposition to every sound principle of taxation."

The author of " Concessions to America," has suggested* another expedient, the adoption of which will depend principally on the West-India body themselves. The additional duty of 3*s.* last year, having been made payable only when the Gazette price should be as high as 50*s.*, (exclusive of duty,) has not, in consequence of the continued depression, yielded any thing to Government. His idea is to make this additional duty absolute on sugar used for home consumption, provided an absolute bounty to the same amount be granted on exportation. It is natural for planters to dread any increase of the home consumption duty, but they may be assured that the operation of such a measure would be beneficial. While we retain the conquered colonies, our importation must so much exceed our consumption, that the foreign demand alone can preserve prices from dwindling to nothing. In fact, our prices are entirely

* Page 22.

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regulated by what the foreigner can afford to give. Let us therefore encourage the foreign demand by every means in our power.

Were Government to allow for bounty on export only the 3*s.* which it is proposed to give as an additional duty on home consumption, a gain would accrue to Government, because the quantity consumed is double the quantity exported. No judicious financier, however, will seek to extract a profit from the sugar market in its present state;—he will desire indemnity only to the Treasury, and will willingly resign to the planter whatever benefit may result from the regulation. An additional duty of 3*s.* per cwt. on home consumption, will supply a fund adequate to the payment of fully 6*s.* a cwt. on exportation; and on this footing ought the regulation to be made.

The object of a bounty of 6*s.* on export, accompanied by a duty of 3*s.* on home consumption is not, as some imagine, to enable foreigners to use sugar at 6*s.* a cwt. less than our own countrymen; for the foreigner will buy at a certain given price, and at no other. This price in December 1806, was 34*s.* free on board, exclusive of duty;* at present it is about 31*s.* The rule with foreigners is to buy sugar here, if they can get it cheaper than elsewhere. The bounty on export does not affect them—they will not in consequence lower the rate of their orders—they will still

* Report of Distillery Committee, page 2.

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order sugar, if to be shipt free on board at 31*s.* as before. Were the market, by any measure of internal regulation, such as the use of sugar in distilleries, to be raised at present 6*s.* a cwt.; a great proportion of the orders of foreigners would be withdrawn, but if it be raised 6*s.* by the bounty on export, the case to the foreigner remains the same, and he continues his purchases as before. The benefit is therefore to the planter, who retains the foreigner's orders, although the currency of the market is 6*s.* higher than the limit of these orders.

The planter, however, having an additional duty of 3*s.* to pay, may not clearly see in what way he will be a gainer by this arrangement. Let us suppose, that of a cargo of 280 hogsheads, 180 are sold for home consumption, and 100 for exportation, and that the price of the whole, as rendered to the planter, is 40*s.* exclusive of duty. The point gained, is to induce the foreigner to buy in a market, the average price of which is 40*s.*—not that he pays either more or less than he did before, but that the home consumer pays more, and that we retain the foreigner as a customer. A general enhancement of price takes place to the amount of 6*s.*, and the new duty being only 3*s.*, the other 3*s.* go to the planter. The operation of this plan may be more easily comprehended by attending to the followng facts. The additional duty of 3*s.* a cwt. paid by the home consumer, is on the whole consumption about £300,000. Were sugars not to rise, this duty like all the late duties

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would be a dead loss to the planter. But if sugars rise (as they no doubt would on the proposed plan) this sum of £300,000 would be paid by the public, and must go some where. To the foreigner it will not go, because he buys as before, only at such prices as the Americans cannot sell at. He attends very little to our internal regulations, and often does not understand them. He orders his British correspondent to buy him sugar, if to be shipt *free on board* at 31*s*, and not otherwise.—In the treasury the £300,000 does not remain, for it will be paid away in bounties. To the planter therefore it does and must go, although the mode in which he receives it is not immediately perceptible.

When I had written thus far, the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, delivered on the 24th of July, came into my hands. After giving an affecting picture of the calamitous state of the West-Indies, this Report recommends a diminution of duty in a progressive ratio, according to the fall of prices. The Committee assume 30*s*. as the amount of duty which ought to be paid, when the market price of sugar is so high as 80*s*., and for every subsequent fall of 2*s*. in the price, they propose to deduct 1*s*. of the duty, until the price falling to 60*s*., there would remain 40*s*. to the planter, and 20*s*. to the revenue. The operation of this measure, while markets continue overstocked as they are at present, would be to aid the planter by relinquishing a portion of revenue. No doubt the

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revenue must give way, had we no other alternative; but let us in these times of public danger and difficulty spare the revenue as much as possible. I shall first lay down a few general rules, and afterwards follow these up by a specific proposition.

The price which the consumer ought to pay for a commodity, should be the expence of producing and bringing it to market, with a profit to the persons engaged in this trade, along with such duties as the legislature has judged fit to impose. But by the proposition of the West-India Committee, the less the market price, the less would be the duty. The consumer has had sugar too cheap for nine years already, and a measure of this kind would tend to confirm to the consumer what he has no right to expect.

It appears by the official returns subjoined to this Report, (page 73) that of the whole West-India produce imported into Britain, nearly *one third* is exported to foreign parts, exclusive of Ireland. Here is an important fact established beyond contradiction.—It will next be found, not indeed upon official evidence, but upon the concurrent testimony of our most intelligent merchants, of those who (see the Evidence of Mr. Bosanquet and Mr. Marryatt) have thoroughly studied the causes which influence the sugar market, that our prices are regulated by our exports, that is, when we are overstocked, our prices fall to the low rate at which foreigners can afford

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to purchase, after which they fall no more.* Accordingly, our prices have been for many months at the very low rate of 33*s.* and 34*s.* exduty. Now that these are the prices at which foreigners order sugar, may be learnt by a reference, either to the Royal Exchange, or to the recorded testimony of the Distillery Report, (page 2.) Miserable as is this price, it would have been still much lower, had it not been for the intervention of the foreign demand. I infer from this, that *no consideration should induce us to neglect the preservation of the foreign demand.* In what way, it may be asked, do you run any hazard of losing it? You will lose it whenever your market rises above what neutrals can afford it for. At present you have it because you sell at 33*s.* exduty, sugar which costs the British planter above 63*s.* (see page 22 of this work,) and the French planter above 53*s.* to manufacture and send home. —Of course when your prices are so low, not even the neutrals can stand in competition with you. If indeed the neutral intercourse be stopped, the case will be widely different. Prices in that event will rise considerably, and foreigners must buy of you; but as the stoppage of neutrals is a national question, the nation should reap the advantage, for the loss, if any, will fall on the nation. The West-India planter should neither receive the benefit nor sustain the loss of public measures adopted upon public grounds—these chances should

* See this point explained in page 19 of this work, and more fully in the "Concessions to America," page 16.

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be taken by the country at large, and in this respect the country at large is represented by the revenue.

The foreign demand for sugar has hitherto been preserved at the expence of the planter, and for several months back it has required the additional aid of 2*s.* bounty from Government. Now neither the planter nor Government ought to bear this burden. The planter ought in no case to bear it, and government ought not to bear it at present, while the home consumer of sugar pays so much less than its legitimate price. In whatever view you consider the case of the home consumer, you will find the justice of the argument, that he pays much less for it than he ought. The fair price to indemnify the planter ought to be 69*s.* and 6*d.* exduty *—instead of which the actual currency is, and has long been, only 33*s.* Compare this with the progressive rise of other commodities. Within these last ten years, the price of other commodities has risen at least a third; but during the same period, sugar instead of rising at all, or even of keeping stationary, has *decreased a third.*

But the planter will say, "Let the Revenue give way, and let sugar continue cheap to the consumer, because its cheapness increases the extent of its consumption." Now there is much less truth in this opinion than planters are apt to imagine. Its

* See page 22.

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cheapness will increase in some measure the consumption, and its dearness in some measure lessen it; but neither will operate in any material degree. Was the consumption visibly lessened in 1797 and 1798, when prices were high, or has it materially increased in the long and melancholy period of depression which has since intervened? On this head, in which I profess an opinion so different from many planters, I refer them again to the evidence of Mr. Bosanquet and Mr. Marryatt, and to the conclusive reasonings in the "Concessions to America," page 18.

Having premised these general observations, and established them I trust on convincing grounds, I proceed to explain the conclusion, to which they appear to me to lead. I would first ascertain the price which the home consumer *ought* to pay, and next the price which the foreigner, who is not under our controul, *is willing and able* to pay. It has already been mentioned, that the price which the home consumer ought to pay for all commodities, is the expence of raising and bringing them to market, with a reasonable profit to the persons engaged in the particular traffic, as well as the duty to government. By this rule, and according to the estimate in page 92 of this work, the average price of sugar to the consumer should be 69*s.* and 6*d.* exduty. This estimate is confirmed, at least to the extent of 65*s.*, by the West-India Report in pages 4 and 20; and it would be easy so shew, that the

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evidence subjoined to that Report, particularly that of Mr. Wedderburn, justifies my statement of 69*s.* and 6*d.* Instead, however, of paying 69*s.* and 6*d.* exduty, the home consumer has for many months paid only 33*s.* and 6*d.* If we next inquire the price which the foreigner is willing and able to pay, we shall find it between 31*s.* and 34*s.* We sell it at present to the foreigner at that rate, but if we raise our price we lose his custom, because neutrals for a few shillings more will bring it to his door. We must therefore on no account lose his custom, but we must raise our market price, or our planters will be ruined. The plan I propose is to lay an additional tax on the home consumer, who has so long possessed an undue advantage in the price of sugar; and from that tax to provide a fund for a bounty on export.

Some persons may object to this plan, that by it we should tax our own people to let foreigners use sugar cheaper than them. No such thing. The plan proposed is not for the foreigner's benefit, it is for our own. If we chose to import only as much sugar as we required for ourselves, we should be altogether independent of the foreigner; but we do, and will continue to import much more than we want; and as we cannot force the foreigner to give us *our* price, we must either come down to *his*, or accumulate a mass of useless produce.

To give the planter 8 per cent. on his capital, it

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would be requisite (see page 22) that the average price of sugar during war were 69*s.* 6*d.* exduty. To give him 10 per cent. it ought to be 78*s.*, and to give him only 4 per cent. it ought to be 53*s.* Were Government to fix a scale by which the planter's profits should not on the one hand exceed 10 per cent., and on the other hand should not be less than 4 per cent., the rates of price which would denote these respective proportions during war would therefore be 78*s.* exduty in the one case, and 53*s.* exduty in the other,—that is until the average rate became 53*s.* a bounty should be paid, and after it rose to 78*s.* a part of the drawback should be retained. That these ought in justice to be the respective rates, cannot be doubted. The maximum in peace was indeed fixed at 58*s.*, but independently of the wide difference between peace and war, it does not appear that any such allowance was made in 1802 for plantation charges, as the evidence before both the Distillery and West-India Committees now proves to be indispensable. And the limit of 50*s.* fixed in 1806, can in no point of view be considered a *maximum*. The statement of page 22 (in this work) is founded on accurate investigation and the ratio of 10 per cent., adopted by me as the maximum of profit, is declared by the Report of the West-India Committee to be only "a fair and neces-"sary profit."* The table of bounty and taxation which would result from combining these various considerations, would be as follows.—When the average

* Report page 4, and the Evidence passim.

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Gazette price rises so high as 78*s.* exduty, discourage further exports by a tax. When it is between 78*s.* and 53*s.* draw back the duty, and no more. But when it falls below 53*s.* encourage export by a bounty. When the average is

52*s.* give 1*s.* bounty.	43.....10*s.*
51.....2	42.....11
50.....3	41.....12
49.....4	40.....13
48.....5	39.....14
47.....6	38.....15
46.....7	37.....16
45.....8	36.....17
44.....9	35 and under 18

The fund for the payment of this bounty may be supplied without so formidable an addition to the tax on home consumption as might at first be imagined. The maximum of bounty is 18*s.*, but Government already pays and must continue to pay 2*s.*, so that the new charge is only 16*s.* To argue that 16*s.*, the highest rate, would be paid on our exports all the year through, is to suppose an extreme case. But even in that event 8*s.* additional duty on home consumption would fully meet the whole of this charge; there can, however, be little doubt but the Chancellor of the Exchequer would willingly take the chance of bounty at an average of 12*s.*, and consider the Revenue indemnified by an addition of 6*s.* to the duty on home consumption.

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Such appears to be the plan best fitted to accomplish the relief of the planter without injury to the Revenue. In every country where colonial monopoly is enforced, the planter should be restrained from extravagant profits, and protected from heavy losses, by a fixed arrangement of this kind; for the want of a regulating scale like this, has occasioned to him, during the last nine years, all the evils without any of the advantages of monopoly.

Further, an arrangement of this nature would transfer from the planter to the nation at large the chances of gain or loss which arise from political events. Over these events the planters have no influence. The measures of the British Cabinet are guided by a reference to the interest, not of a part of the Empire, but of the whole. The neutral intercourse, for instance, will be interrupted by a consideration of the expediency of such a measure, not as regarding the West-India body, but as regarding the collective interests of the kingdom. Let the nation at large therefore reap the benefit which may arise from the enhancement of sugar, if this measure be adopted, because the nation at large must sustain the inconveniencies with which such a measure may be accompanied. The benefit accruing from this enhancement of price would go to the Revenue, because the bounties being no longer necessary, the fund provided for them, and arising from the increased duty on home consumption, might be appropriated to the national expenditure.

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The same reasoning applies to the question of introducing sugar into the distilleries. If Government prohibit the use of barley in distillation, it will be from the dearness of barley, not from the cheapness of sugar. Let the country therefore have the benefit of the substitution, because it pays in another way (namely, in the high price of barley) for the cause of that substitution.—In whatever way we examine this point, we shall be impressed with the necessity of assuring a moderate but steady profit to the planter, whose hands we tie by a monopoly; and of lessening those extreme chances of loss or gain which may arise from the enforcement of that monopoly, or from political causes which he cannot controul.

I would therefore recommend to the West-India body, to make an urgent application to Government, to the effect which the preceding considerations suggest. *Such a plan is the only mode of obtaining a demand equal to the supply*, which would be "all in all" to the planter, and which he should anxiously aim to accomplish by the most vigorous measures. Let him not be deterred by the almost groundless apprehension, that an increase of tax on the home consumer will materially decrease the extent of the consumption. But if it be judged unadvisable to carry this measure in the first instance, to the extent that has now been suggested, let the Legislature revert to two Acts which it has already passed, and adapt them to the altered circumstances of the present period. These two Acts are—that of 1802,

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which fixed the scale of bounty and taxation for peace; and that of 1806, which added 3*s.* to the duty on home consumption. The proposed alterations are "to raise the scale of 1802 from peace to war rates, by advancing these rates 10*s.* throughout,* and to make the 3*s.* imposed in 1806 as a conditional duty an absolute one, in order to provide a fund for a bounty." The effect of these alterations would be that the home consumption duty would be 30*s.*, instead of 27*s.*; and that the scale of bounty and taxation would stand thus:

When the Gazette price should be so low as 45*s.* a bounty of.....2*s.*
between 45 and 50*s.*.....1*s.*
between 50 and 68 no bounty, but the whole duty drawn back.
above 68*s.* the duty to be partially retained by Government.

The addition which I propose to this scale, and for which I would provide out of the increased home consumption duty, is that

When the Gazette price should be so low as 44*s.* the bounty should be.....3*s.*
43*s.*.....4
42.....5
41.....6
40.....7
39.....8
38.....9

* See the reasons for this increase of 10*s.* stated page 64.

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37*s.* the bounty should be..... 10*s.*
36 11
35 and under..... 12

The principle of this plan is the same as that stated in page 75, but its extent is smaller. Let us consider how it will affect respectively the revenue, the planter, the foreigner, and the home consumer.

The revenue will receive 3*s.* additional on all sugar used for home consumption. It would appear, (Appendix to the West-India Report, page 73) that more than two-thirds of our whole import are consumed in Britain and Ireland. We shall suppose, however, that according to the new plan, the export will increase, and will be one-third of the whole import. In that case, the consumption being twice as great as the export, 3*s.* duty on home consumption will supply a fund for 6*s.* bounty on export. Now a bounty of 2*s.* is already paid by Government, and must continue, as we have repeatedly proved, to be paid while the neutral intercourse is permitted. These two sources together meet the bounty which I propose to the extent of 8*s.*; and the only hazard to the revenue is the chance of paying 4*s.* more bounty on the export than it does at present. Taking things at the worst, and supposing these 4*s.* paid on the whole of our next year's exports; and that these exports are large, (1,000,000 cwt.) it will cost the revenue only £220,000. By this plan therefore, we have a prospect of attaining a similar result to that which

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is proposed by the Report of the Committee, at a hazard to the revenue probably three times as great.

It is not likely that either the West-India merchant or the planter, will at first coincide with me in this anxiety to limit as much as possible the demand upon the revenue. They will say, and justly say, that the revenue has profited most largely for many years, during which their losses have been excessive; that it is now time that the revenue should make such a sacrifice as will afford them effectual relief; and that the measure suggested by the Committee of the House of Commons should be carried into effect to its full extent. True, unhappily too true! but it is in vain that you expect aid at the expence of the revenue, after the country has been subjected to fifteen years of unexampled taxation. It appears, that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, does not ascribe the depression of the sugar market to the amount of the duty.* The knowledge of this fact is sufficient to damp the hopes which the impressive language of the Report of the Committee at first inspired; but it is good to know the worst, and to know it as early as possible. Persevere in your intreaties for relief, but give to them that direction which is most likely to be successful. A partial sacrifice of revenue may be made in consideration of your extreme distress, but do not flatter yourselves with the expectation

* Debate in the House of Commons, 10th of August, 1807.

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of any sacrifice at all equal to your wants. These wants cannot be otherwise satisfied than by the joint operation of a sacrifice of revenue, and of other accompanying measures of relief.

The next question is how will this alteration affect the planter? It will raise prices 10*s.* a cwt., of which 10*s.* the planter will pay the revenue 3*s.* and retain 7*s.* It besides prevents the evil of accumulating produce, because the foreigner will be induced by lowness of price, to continue to buy largely, and to clear the market as he does at present. A rise of 7*s.* is, I admit, a very inadequate advance to the planter; but this inadequacy results from the limited application of the principles which I have endeavoured to explain. If, however, Ministers and the West-India body are agreed as to the beneficial operation of the plan I have suggested, it is for them to give it the extension which I proposed in the first instance—an extension which would not only save a part of the £220,000 to the Revenue, but afford the planter a clear rise of 12*s.* instead of 7*s.*

How will the plan I have suggested affect the foreigner? No otherwise than by enabling him to buy sugar here at all times, in the way he does at present, that is, as cheap or cheaper than neutrals can afford it. The foreigner does not carry the bounty out of the kingdom; he often does not know its amount—all he asks is, whether sugar can be shipt free on board at 30*s.* or 32*s.*, and if that is the case, he commissions

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his British correspondent to buy for him. On this head I request a reference to what I have already stated in pages 66 and 70.

The broad truth is, that we import a great deal more sugar than we consume, and we must by some means or other obtain the auxiliary consumption of a part of the Continent. If Government deem it expedient to stop the neutral intercourse, the point is attained, because foreigners must then come to us. If that however, is not done, you must preserve the foreign consumption by selling sugar as cheap as neutrals. But your homeward freight and insurance joined to the freight and insurance from this to the Continent, cost more than the freight and insurance of enemy's produce to Europe by way of America. This extra charge the foreigner will not pay you; you must therefore sell him your sugar free of this extra charge; that is, you must pay this extra charge yourselves. The only alternative is to have nothing to do with importing this surplus of one-third above your home consumption, but to let the planter sell it abroad. This is what the planter anxiously desires; but there are serious objections to it at home. Many, though not all, of the West-India merchants would oppose it, and the Shipping interest will tell you, that by throwing three hundred sail of West-Indiamen out of employ, you will ruin the ship owner, and hazard the national safety.

It remains that we consider how the proposed alter-

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ation will affect the home consumer. It will enhance sugar 10*s.* a cwt., making that cost 70*s.* which at present costs only 60*s.* No one will seriously argue that this would be a hardship, for even after this addition, sugar would be the cheapest of commodities; and were this addition twice told, the price of sugar would yet be extremely reasonable. Indeed were sugar at its present low rate in consequence of a low duty, it is the article which, of all others, would be selected for taxation. Why should you not therefore do for the planter what you would do for the revenue? Besides, the consumers of sugar in other countries are subjected to duties nearly as heavy as those in Britain. In France, sugar imported in French vessels pays a duty of 19*s.* sterling a cwt., and in all other vessels it pays 23*s.* sterling.* Considering the difference in the value of money in the two countries, 21*s.* in France is not more than 30*s.* here. During nine years the British consumer has bought sugar much below its proper price. He has been enabled to do this at the expence of the planter, and from the circumstance (so often mentioned) of our yearly imports being much larger than the consumption. But no one will contend that this circumstance gives him the slightest right to the advantage he has so long enjoyed. Is it the intention of the British Legislature that the home consumer should be thus favoured? No; their intention is clearly that he should pay 27*s.* (or rather 30*s.*) to the Revenue, after paying the planter the expence of

* Mr. Wilson's evidence before the West-India Committee, p. 56.

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making and bringing the sugar to market. If the rise of sugar tended like that of corn to heighten the price of labour, it would be unwise to exact the full price from the consumer, but the rise of sugar has no such tendency. In every view of the question therefore, the home consumer should be obliged to contribute, and the scale I have proposed is extremely moderate.

I shall conclude this part of my subject, by repeating and presenting in one view, the most important of the facts which have formed the basis of the preceding arguments.

Our import exceeds our consumption by 90,000 hogsheads, which must either go abroad or accumulate at home. Abroad they cannot go, unless we continue to sell them at a lower rate than neutrals, or interrupt the traffic of these neutrals. The former has hitherto been the case, and the prices of the whole market have been regulated by the foreigner's standard. To allow this low standard to continue to regulate the whole market another year, will be ruin to the planter; yet the foreigner must at all hazards be retained. You must therefore raise the price to the home consumer, and keep it at as low a rate to the foreigner as that at which he can buy from neutrals. You can accomplish this only by a bounty; whence is this bounty to be got? Partly from the Revenue, but chiefly fom the home consumer, who does not pay at present above two-thirds of the fair price of sugar. It is an error to think that this bounty

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is carried out of the kingdom by the foreigner; he neither knows nor desires to know its amount; he orders sugar to be bought, if to be had free on board at a certain price; this price may be one or two shillings less than he can buy it for from neutrals. His British correspondent deducts the bounty from the market price; and if the market price after this deduction is within the foreigner's limits, the order is executed; if it is beyond these limits, the foreigner applies to the neutral and the order is lost to the British Merchant.

IV. *The last expedient is to relieve the Planter from the restriction of monopoly, and allow him to sell his produce in the Colonies.*

To dwell upon this alternative would be an unwelcome subject to the public at any time; at present, when the Committee of the House of Commons have so strongly recommended the immediate and effectual relief of the Colonies, it is to be hoped that such a discussion will be unnecessary. It is important, however, to tell Government and the country that no monopoly can continue to be enforced in a case where, like that of the West-India Colonies, the demand is altogether inadequate to the supply. If they cannot protect the planter from the evils of monopoly, they must relieve him from its bondage, and the period of this relief must not be longer delayed, or it will come too late. Affecting as is the picture of the sufferings of the West-Indies exhibited in the Report

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of the Committee, it still falls far short of the reality. The merchants and planters examined by the Committee are all opulent men—*their* fortunes are impaired, but their less powerful neighbours are ruined.

I shall now recapitulate the various measures which have been suggested for the relief of the planters.

1. To allow a more liberal limit than one shilling a gallon for the difference in the tenders of rum and brandy for the use of the Navy.

2. To adapt the Excise Laws without delay to the introduction of sugar in the distilleries, as recommended by the Distillery Committee.

3. To reduce the duty on home consumption, as explained in the Report of the West-India Committee, page 5.

4. To prevent the conveyance of enemy's produce to Europe by way of America. See the Report already mentioned, page 6.

5. To provide a fund for bounty on the export of sugar, partly from the Revenue, but chiefly from an increased duty on the home consumer. This principle to be adopted either on an extended scale, (as explained page 75,) or on the more limited scale arising from the Act of 1802. Formerly the consumption of sugar at home was equal, or nearly equal

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to the importation, and while that was the case the monopoly was of little injury to the planter. But now that the excess of our import is so immense, a radical change in our system of colonial intercourse is indispensable.

The price stated by the West-India Committee as necessary to indemnify the planter* is 65 or 66*s.* ex-duty. My calculations (page 22) imply that an average of 69*s.* is required to attain this object. The present rate is between 33 and 34*s.*; a price so completely inadequate, that to accomplish the relief of the planter will, apparently, require not merely the aid to be derived from any one of the above mentioned measures, but the concurrent adoption of the whole. After so many years of suffering, the present is no season for indecision. The planter had long complained in vain, and it is but lately, since he found complaint unavailing, that he has ventured to suggest the probable necessity of laying open the monopoly. I advise him to adhere to this declaration, and to raise the voice of remonstrance to a louder note. Let him tell the British Government that if he continues subject to ruinous restrictions, he must transport himself and his negroes to colonies where such restrictions are not enforced. Let him tell the merchant, who rather than forego the advantages attached to the monopoly, is contented to acquiesce in the oppression of the colonies, that in his solicitude to preserve his profits, he will lose his capital; but let him add, that means

* Pages 4 and 20.

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may be devised by which the monopoly may be relaxed, and the returns due from the planter to the merchant continue to be paid. "Give us a fair price in Britain for our sugars, or open a free market in the islands, and we will cheerfully submit to such alterations in the system of colonial law as the interest of our creditors at home may appear to require. Since the abolition of the slave trade, our estates are no longer to be considered in a state of progressive extension—they are stationary as to the quantity of their produce, and although we hope to improve its quality, we do not now claim all that indulgence, in regard to legal measures, which was necessary in the infancy of our settlements. Your impolitic regulations, your cruel delay in redressing our grievances, have converted a blessing into a curse. It would have been better for us to have known the worst, and to have seen our properties sold by public auction many years ago, than to have accumulated debts which the labour of our lives cannot repay. Will you then still refuse to permit us to make the most of our property by removing all restraint on the mode of our manufacture, or on the channels of its export?"

It will seem incredible to a West-India planter, but it is, notwithstanding, too true that the nation at large knows little of his distress. The tale of his misery has not been told throughout the country; the measures hitherto adopted for this purpose by the Committee of planters and merchants have been inadequate, and even the Report of the Committee of the House

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of Commons will scarcely be read by any others than the members. The advocate of the planter is opposed in every step by inveterate prejudices. One class of men are weak enough to insist that the picture of his present calamity is overcharged; another that his former profits were immense, while a third are so inconsiderate as to maintain that the welfare of Britain is independent of her colonies. Every branch of the community views the question through the narrow medium of private interest, or rather of imagined interest, for the only true interest either of the public or the individual is, that each should make a partial sacrifice for the general good. The danger of Britain lies not in the strength of her enemies, but in the predominating influence of her national prejudices. The mind of Pitt had long designed the Union of Ireland, but he durst not propose it to the British people, until a season of unparalleled danger appeared to leave no alternative but union or separation.* Nothing will afford complete relief to the West-Indies, until the extent of their misery makes the country alive to the necessity of the most decisive measures. The great object is to impress the public with an adequate sense of the actual distress. All that has been hitherto done with that view has been insufficient. The assembly of every island in the Windward Colonies, and the heads of every district in Jamaica, should immediately lay their grievances before the British legislature, and solicit that speedy and effectual relief, which alone can redeem them from destruction.

* See his speech of 3d of November, 1801.

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CHAPTER V.

Advantages of Peace to the West-Indies, and to our general commerce. Our prospects of Peace and the probable terms on which we may conclude it.

No measure which the wisdom of the British Legislature could devise, or the energy of the British nation execute, could so effectually relieve the hardships of our West-India colonies as peace. Its beneficent operation would be immediately felt in the diminished price of stores, insurance, and freight; in the multiplied channels of export; in the general security of the islands; in short, in so many various ways that the enumeration would be endless. As peace therefore is so essential to the welfare of the West Indies, and so important to the national interests at large, I shall treat at some length of our prospects of concluding it; of the terms that will probably be offered us, and of the influence of peace on our commerce and manufactures. I shall endeavour also to examine the foundation of the popular opinion, that our danger from France is greater in peace than in war, and what probability there is that a treaty with Bonaparte will be lasting.

Let us first enquire into the disposition of the French

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Government in regard to peace with Great Britain. This disposition is not to be learned from Bonaparte's addresses to his soldiers, but from the offers which he made to us when we were in actual negociation with him. Now, although the documents which passed on both sides during that interesting period, have been many months before the public, it is pretty obvious that the public have not studied them; for a strange misapprehension appears to prevail regarding them. The friends of the late ministry justified our breaking off the negociation, because the French refused to admit the principle of *uti possidetis*, and their opponents accused them of having been the dupes of French artifice throughout a protracted negociation. But let him who desires to form an unprejudiced opinion of our conduct on that occasion, read the speech of Mr. Whitbread or the declaration of Lord Yarmouth himself.* The merchants of London applauded the rupture of the negociation when it was announced to them; but how little did they then know of the concessions of our enemy. All that they, or the public at large then knew, was, that a state of painful suspense had continued for several months—a state from which even the certainty of war was a relief. Many apprehended that Mr. Fox in his anxiety for peace might commit the national dignity, and that Bonaparte might presume to address this country in the insolent tone which he assumes to his weaker neighbours.

* Debate on the negociation, 5th January, 1807.

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But they were not aware that the "hauteur" had been chiefly on our side, and that this mighty Emperor, who dictates laws to the Continent, had condescended to ask peace from England by the restitution of Hanover, and by sanctioning our possession in perpetuity, not only of the Cape, but of Malta, the object of the war, and the point of honour between the two nations.

Let us refer to these documents themselves, and see how far it can be said with truth that the French refused us honourable conditions.

Mr. Fox's Letter of 26th March, (Negociation Papers, No. 5.) says—

The true basis of a negociation between two great powers, equally despising every idea of chicane, would be the reciprocal recognition of the following principle; viz. that the object of both parties should be a peace honourable for both, and for their respective Allies; and, at the same time, of a nature to secure, as far as is in their power, the future tranquillity of Europe.

Extracts from Talleyrand's Answer, dated Paris, April 1, 1806.

SIR—*The very instant* I received your letter of the 26th March, I waited upon his Majesty, and I am happy to inform you, that he has authorised me to send you, without delay, the following answer:—

The Emperor covets nothing that England possesses. Peace with France is possible, and may be perpetual, pro-

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vided there is no interference in her internal affairs, and that no attempt is made to restrain her in the regulation of her custom duties; to cramp her commercial rights; or to offer any insult to her flag.—You express a desire that the negociation may not terminate in a short-lived peace. France is more interested than any other power that it should be permanent. It is not her interest to make a truce; since a truce would only *pave the way for fresh losses.* You know very well that nations, similar in this respect to individuals, accustom themselves to a state of war, as well as to a state of peace. All the losses that France could sustain, she has sustained. This will ever be the case, in the first six months of war. At present, our commerce and our industry * have taken the channel dictated by the circumstances of our country, and are adapted to our state of war. Consequently a truce of two or three years would be a thing of all others the most opposite to our commercial interests, and to the Emperor's policy.—We are ready to make peace with the whole world. We wish to dictate to no one. But we will not be dictated to; and no one possesses either the power or the means of doing it.—Our interests are reconcileable, inasmuch as they are distinct. You are the Rulers of the Ocean; your naval forces are equal to those of all the sovereigns of the world united. We are a great continental power; but there are several who equal our power by land; and *your maritime preponderance will always place our commerce at the mercy of your squadrons, immediately after your declaring war.*—The Emperor is ready to make *every concession, which, from the extent of your naval forces, and of your preponderance, you may desire to obtain.* I

* Se sont repliés sur eux mêmes.

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do not think that you can refuse to adopt the same principle of making him proposals conformable to the honour of his crown and the commercial rights of his dominions. If you are just—if you desire only what is possible for you to obtain, peace will be soon made.—I conclude, by declaring that his Majesty fully adopts the principle laid down in your dispatch, and offered as the basis of the negociation, "that the peace proposed should be honourable for "the two Courts, and for their respective Allies."

After a good deal of controversy on the plan of negociating with or without Russia, Talleyrand writes in his letter of 2d June—

To leave, from henceforward, no room for any misunderstanding, I think it my duty to propose to you, 1st, To negociate in the same preliminary forms which were adopted during the administration of the Marquis of Rockingham, in 1782; 2dly, To establish as a basis, two fundamental principles, the first, which I take from your letter of the 26th March, namely, "*That the two "states should have for their object that the peace be honour-"able for them and their respective allies, and at the same "time of a nature to secure, as far as in their power, the "future tranquillity of Europe.*" *The second principle shall be, an acknowledgment on the part of the two powers of their mutual right of interference and guarantee in continental and maritime affairs.* His Majesty, far from being unwilling to make this avowal, desires to raise it to a principle; and, in thus explaining his real intentions, I think I have given you a decisive proof of his pacific dispositions.

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Extract from Mr. Fox's answer, 14th June.

The basis offered in your second proposition is exactly conformable to the views of our government, provided it be well understood that, whilst we mutually acknowledge our respective rights of interference and guarantee with regard to the affairs of Europe, we also mutually agree to abstain from all encroachment upon the greater or lesser states which compose it.

Extract from Mr. Fox's letter of 26th June, to Lord Yarmouth.

The result of what I have stated to your Lordship is this: 1st, That Sicily is a *sine quâ non;* on which subject, if the French minister recedes from his former answer, it is in vain that any further discussion should take place.—You will of course again mention the questions of Naples and Istria. If we could attain either of them, it would be well; but if we cannot, your Lordship will not state these points as conclusive reasons against agreeing on preliminary articles, provided such articles be considered as provisional and subject to the approbation of Russia.

After this a great deal of time was allowed to pass in discussions about Sicily, and in waiting to know whether Russia would or would not ratify D'Oubril's treaty. In the end of August however the French became solicitous to quicken the negociation, and Lord Lauderdale writes, 30th August, as follows—

M. de Champagny invited me to name a day for resuming our conference. To this, I decidedly objected, admitting, at the same time, that they had made conces-

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sions in the course of our discussion) but adding, that they were still so far from agreeing to admit what the English government uniformly conceived the original proposition to have conveyed, that I could not indulge any hopes of our coming to an agreement, and should therefore feel it necessary to terminate my mission.—M. de Champagny asked me with some warmth, whether I wished for peace on the terms which I myself had stated? whether I thought myself authorized, after the concessions he had just made, to refuse them time to consider how much further they might go? and whether I might not reasonably entertain hopes that, with a little time, the differences which appeared now to separate us might vanish?—On receiving such a remonstrance, I thought it impossible not to agree to a renewal of the conference; and after some conversation, Thursday was fixed for the day of our meeting.

Some further delay having occurred in consequence of the refusal of Russia to ratify D'Oubril's treaty, and of Lord Lauderdale's indisposition, it was not till the 26th September that Lord Lauderdale was enabled to be more specific. He then wrote as follows—

On the 25th at one o'clock, M. de Champagny called on me, as had been previously agreed, for the purpose of renewing the conferences.—After the usual interchange of civilities, he proceeded to say, that, to secure peace, the Emperor had determined to make great sacrifices.

1st. That Hanover with its dependencies should be restored to his Majesty.

2d, That the possession of Malta should be confirmed to Great Britain.

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3d, That France would interfere with Holland to confirm to his Majesty the absolute possession of the Cape.

4th, That the Emperor would confirm to his Majesty the possession of Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Mahee, and the other dependent comptoirs.

5th, That as Tobago was originally settled by the English, it was meant also to give that island to the crown of Great Britain.

To all this he added, that what he had now said proceeded on the supposition, that Sicily was to be ceded, and that the French Government proposed that his Sicilian Majesty should have as indemnity, not only the Balearic Islands, but should also receive an annuity from the court of Spain to enable him to support his dignity.

His Lordship having had a second conference on the same day with M. Champagny, wrote again as follows—

A long discussion ensued, which ended in his informing me that on the subject of concession to Russia, he was authorized to communicate to me, that the Government of France was willing in addition to the treaty made by M. d'Oubril, to cede to that power the full sovereignty of the Island of Corfu; but that he had no authority to go any farther.—I then informed him, that I was sorry to learn that the negociation was at an end, for that my instructions were precise.—After strong expressions of mutual regard, he attended me to the outer room, *where he again proposed a renewal of our conferences, in case his government should give him new instructions.*—My answer was that I had no choice in immediately applying for passports; but

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that, as long as I remained in this country, *I never would refuse to see him.*

The negociation was at last ended by giving his Lordship his passports accompanied by the following letters:

Paris, 5th October, 1806.

M. DE CHAMPAGNY has the honour to transmit to his Excellency, the Earl of Lauderdale, the accompanying dispatch, addressed to his Excellency by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. He is also charged to inform him, that he is now authorized to deliver to him the passports which he has demanded. This of all the duties which he has had to discharge towards his Excellency, is the only one which will have appeared painful to him; and it will be greatly so. He waits to be informed of the further dispositions of his Excellency.

Extract of a note from M. Talleyrand to the Earl of Lauderdale, dated Mentz, October 1, 1806.

The Emperor, after having, from a desire of peace listened to every proposition which could have rendered it durable and of reciprocal advantage to the two contracting powers, and to their allies, will see with pain the rupture of a negociation, to which his own disposition had led him to hope a more favourable conclusion. If the English cabinet is resolved to forego the prospect of a peace, and, if his Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary must depart from France, his Majesty still flatters himself that the English cabinet and Lord Lauderdale will, when they shall measure the extent of the sacrifices which he was dis-

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posed to make, in order to facilitate the return of a sincere reconciliation, be convinced that his Majesty, in order to promote the happiness of the world, would not hesitate between any advantages in comparison with those to be expected from peace; and that the desire to ensure its benefits to his people, could alone have determined him to make sacrifices not only of self-love but of power, more considerable than even the opinion of the English Nation could have pointed out.—His Majesty cannot see but with regret, that England, who might have strengthened and confirmed her vast power by the blessings of peace, the want of which is felt by the present generation, and by the English people as well as all others, willingly suffers the most favourable opportunity of concluding it to pass by. The event will disclose, whether a new coalition will be more disadvantageous to France than those which have preceded it. The event will also disclose, whether those who complain of the grandeur and ambition of France, should not impute to their own hatred and injustice, this very grandeur and ambition of which they accuse her. The power of France has only been increased by the reiterated efforts to oppress her. Nevertheless whatever inferences for the future may be drawn from the examples of the past, his Majesty will be ready, should the negociations with England, be broken off, *to renew them in the midst of any events.* He will be ready to replace them on the basis laid in concert with the illustrious Minister whom England has lost.

These extracts shew not only the anxiety of Bonaparte to make peace with us, but that he was ready to give the most satisfactory proofs of that anxiety in the

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conditions of peace. There were three obstacles to the success of the negociation.—First, Bonaparte's ambition to have Sicily, which was so strong, as to make him attempt to bribe us to acquiescence by offering us the retention of Pondicherry and Tobago; this point however he would have given up, rather than have broken off the negotiation. The second obstacle was our demand of a frontier, to be possessed by Russia, on the side of Istria, as a security against French aggression on Turkey. To this it is not likely that any consideration, except the surrender of Sicily, would have induced Bonaparte to accede. Sicily we certainly would not have surrendered, but it is no less true that in Mr. Fox's life-time, we should not have broken off for the sake of Istria; for in his letter of 26th June to Lord Yarmouth, Mr. Fox expresses himself as follows: "Sicily is a *sina qua non*. You will of course again mention the question of Naples and Istria. If we could attain either of these, it would be well; but if we cannot, your Lordship will not state these points as conclusive reasons against agreeing on preliminary articles, provided such articles be considered as provisional and subject to the approbation of Russia." Both these obstacles therefore might have been got over, had not a third and more fatal impediment to peace occurred, in the sudden hostility of Prussia to France. This was the real cause of terminating the negotiation.

It is scarcely necessary to state, that the late treaties of peace on the Continent, have now brought the ques-

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tion of negotiation between France and England, within narrow limits. We cannot cancel the recent changes in the state of Europe, but we may prevent further changes by a peace. England will never permit herself to be excluded from interfering in the affairs of the Continent; and France distinctly admits this claim, on condition that we give her an equal privilege in maritime discussions. After the establishment of this principle, the rest of the negotiation is merely a question of terms; nor is it a question difficult of decision. As far as regards our West-India conquests, no intelligent statesman will advise the retention of a single colony. Buenos Ayres was accounted desirable in many respects, but the difference of language and customs, and the incompatibility of religion in the two countries, presented insuperable obstacles to rendering it an appendage of the British empire. Besides our limited population does not afford troops for the double purpose of defending the mother country, and protecting such extensive possessions abroad.—Should we be induced at a future period, to add to the number of the latter, that addition should preferably be made in islands, because islands can be defended by our navy. It would unquestionably be our interest, that Buenos Ayres, Caraccas, and other provinces of Spanish America, were freed from the monopoly of Spain, and open to the industry of our merchants; but a revolutionizing system is not our policy. The period is probably not remote, when these colonies will assert their own independence; and in the mean time, the injury we have caused to Spain, by so long an in-

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terruption of her intercourse with her American possessions, will prove a lasting admonition to cultivate peace with us.

The next consideration is the restitution of Pondicherry. The danger of this restitution consists, not in commercial rivalship, but in opening a channel to French intrigue at the courts of the Indian princes. To sap the foundation of our Indian empire has long been the favourite object of Bonaparte's policy. He regards India with the enthusiasm of a soldier—with the ardour of vulgar prejudice, as an inexhaustible mine of wealth, the source of our riches and our power. To the progress of his intrigues, however, we must oppose *in limine*, a spirited resistance, always remembering, that with such a restless and aspiring opponent as Bonaparte, a submission to partial encroachments is the worst of expedients. Our grand error hitherto has been a misapprehension of his character. We have confounded the effusions of passion with the deliberate resolves of policy. Although he cannot controul his violence, he soon perceives its injurious tendency, and if he can save the shame of a public exposure, he will readily retract where his interest is at stake. Now it is at all times his interest to preserve peace with us; the dread of the hostility of our Navy will effect more for the tranquillity of the world, than the voice of his counsellors or the prayers of his subjects—it is a bridle, which, if dexterously handled, will curb his utmost fury. Had Mr. Addington's ministry been skillful in apprehending the

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temper of their antagonist, and uniform in combining spirit with prudence, France and England might already have enjoyed several years of repose. That ministry made great concessions at Amiens for the sake of permanent tranquillity. They asked to retain nothing which might wound the pride of our rival. Had Bonaparte been a generous or magnanimous character, this moderation on our part would have assured the continuance of profound peace. But he construed our moderation into fear; and when we remonstrated on his aggressions in Switzerland, he had the infatuation to tell us, that we had no right "to interfere with the proceedings of France on any point which did not form a part of the stipulations of the Treaty of Amiens."* It is remarkable, however, that although he made this rash and arrogant reply to our remonstrance, he forbore from all further encroachments during the remaining period of peace. It is clear therefore, that he did not intend to act upon so absurd and violent a declaration, although he could not controul his temper sufficiently to forbear from making it. He told Lord Whitworth, in the memorable interview of the 17th of February, 1803,† that there was no alternative but the "evacuation of Malta or the renewal of war." Yet it soon appeared in the subsequent negotiation, that had we not, by the unfortunate message of the 8th of March, proclaimed our differences to all Europe, we might have kept Malta,

* Declaration of war, May 1803.

† Official papers, 1803, page 59.

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and avoided war. Bonaparte after hearing of that message, declared before a numerous assembly, "Les Anglois veulent la guerre, mais s'ils sont les premiers à tirer l'epée, je serai le dernier à la remettre." Yet the event soon shewed, that he was the first to make pacific overtures. Talleyrand, in the late negotiation, told Lord Lauderdale, "Jamais l'Empereur ne cedera un grain de poussière du territoire François."—Yet a short time after, his Lordship receives an overture, in which the Emperor proposes to give us both Pondicherry and Tobago. In another of these interviews, Talleyrand told his Lordship, that in forty-eight hours the fate of Hanover would be settled for ever. Yet Hanover is still unappropriated, and will be returned to us whenever we chuse to take it.—All these circumstances concur to prove, that Bonaparte's language, towards us at least, is in reality much less serious than it appears—that his declarations are at one time the ebullitions of an ungovernable temper, at another the suggestions of an artful policy. It follows that in negotiating with such a man, we must be prepared for a singular mixture of inconsistency and artifice—inconsistency when his passion masters his reason; and artifice when his reason resumes the ascendant, but receives a wayward impulse from his ambition. Our tone in the negotiation at Amiens was too moderate towards so intemperate a character; and on the other hand, the message of the 8th of March, 1803, conveyed a public affront which his pride was ill fitted to digest. In both respects therefore, we unluckily mistook his temper. We now know it better,

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and the battle of Trafalgar has administered to him a lesson, of which the good effects will be long felt. To all inferior powers he will be a domineering neighbour; but we who possess such effectual means of awing his ambition, and chastising his aggressions, need only preserve a just mixture of prudence and firmness to maintain a permanent tranquillity with him. Confidence, at least personal confidence, there should be none; but what confidence has ever existed in this country towards France under any government? We may have, however, a solid ground of confidence as to the continuance of peace, from the losses which our enemy would suffer in war; and a still stronger confidence as to our own security, from a peace establishment of 60,000 seamen. War with England has always been unpopular in France. Their national vanity is mortified by perpetual defeat, and their individual comfort destroyed by the ruin of their trade.

The negotiation of last year had the good effect of discovering to us the length of concession to which the enemy was disposed to go. The terms on which we might then have made peace, and which we may stipulate whenever we negotiate with skill, are the following:

1. The restitution of Hanover; the retention of Malta and the Cape—our other conquests to be given up.

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2. Sicily to remain in the possession of our Ally, its present Sovereign.

3. An acknowledgement of our right to interfere in questions of continental policy, to be coupled with a similar ackowledgement on our part of the right of France to interfere in maritime questions; to which should be added a mutual engagement to make no encroachment on any of the different states of Europe.

4. In consideration of this engagement, we agree to acknowledge the recent changes on the Continent.

5. We have the means of stipulating honourably for our Allies. Sicily is already mentioned; and to whatever consequences the imprudence of the king of Sweden, and the vindictive spirit of Bonaparte may lead in the first instance, there can be little doubt that the Treaty which concludes peace between France and England, will reinstate the Ally of England in Pomerania.

To many persons it may appear, that these conditions are too favourable to be obtained from Bonaparte in his present elation. I again refer these persons to his actual offers to us last summer, when he was flushed with the humiliation of Austria, and the defeat of the Russians at Austerlitz; when it was considered that we stood alone, and that D'Oubril's treaty had

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detached Russia from our alliance. But a still better ground of confidence arises from the present state of the war. The termination of hostilities on the Continent has terminated the successes of France—she now reverts to the same inglorious and inactive warfare which marked the years 1803 and 1804. Every operation must now be maritime, and it is our's to rule the ocean. The superficial observer, struck with the losses of the Continent, conceives that England has been vanquished in her Allies. Now the truth is, that in our Allies we have been vanquished during the whole war; when alone, we have always been victorious. In 1797, Austria was forced to withdraw from our alliance, and the lot of Britain, it was said, would be either an immediate invasion or a humiliating peace. We replied to those gloomy presages by the victory of the Nile. In 1800, after another unsuccessful struggle, Austria is again compelled to treat separately. We are again left alone, and we atchieve unaided, the victory of Copenhagen and the conquest of Egypt. In 1803, Bonaparte re-echoes, in a message to his Senate, the vulgar opinion that England cannot, single-handed, contend against France. We accepted the challenge, and brought the question to issue at Trafalgar and St. Domingo. How complete would have been our triumph, and the disgrace of France, had our victories not been clouded by the disasters of the Continent!

When we allow due weight to these considerations, and to the impression which they have made

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on the enemy, as was evinced by their concessions to Lord Lauderdale, we can have no doubt of the favourable terms we may obtain. It may be a more difficult task to convince many amongst ourselves that we shall act wisely in accepting them. Our national jealousy of France, and our personal hatred of Bonaparte combine to give popularity to the war, and it has even been said that "perpetual war is preferable to any peace which we can make with our present enemy." How weak and unfounded are such sentiments! Is our enemy not sincere in his desire for peace? has he not said that his ambition is to have ships, colonies and commerce? And does he not know that another rupture will only expose his commerce to be again ruined by our navy? It is undoubted that the desire of peace, of permanent peace, predominates in the mind of Bonaparte, certainly not from motives of humanity, but from a conviction that a permanent peace with England can alone confirm his popularity in France.

But it will be said that peace is dangerous as affording to our enemy the means of recruiting his marine. He will build vessels in Holland, France, Italy and Spain; all these countries will train seamen for his fleet. Let him train seamen and build ships of war, and let him renew the conflict after ten years of preparation. Let him send to sea a hundred, even a hundred and fifty sail of the line—he will in vain assail our unconquerable navy. In how few hours did twenty-seven British ships annihilate an enemy's fleet

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of thirty-three sail of the line, drawn up in a position which gave them the full advantage of their superior numbers. No, it will be in vain for the enemy to build ships, or even to train seamen—these seamen must acquire the energy of Britons before they dispute with us the empire of the ocean. The navigation of the Mediterranean, the coasting, or even the foreign trade of Spain, nay, the coasting and foreign trade of the greatest part of France, are all very ill adapted to the training of real seamen.—Of the inefficiency of the seamen bred in Italy and the south of France, an idea may be formed by the following circumstance —

Mr. Bruce, describing Alexandria, says: "There are two ports, the Old and the New. The entrance into the latter is both difficult and dangerous, having a bar before it; it is the least of the two, though it is what is called the Great Port by Strabo.

"Here only the European ships can lie; and even when here, they are not in safety, as numbers of vessels are constantly lost, though at anchor.

"Above forty were cast ashore and dashed to pieces in March 1773, when I was on my return home, mostly belonging to Ragusa, and the small ports in Provence, while little harm was done to ships of any nation accustomed to the ocean.

"It was curious to observe the different procedure of these different nations upon the same accident. As soon as the squall began to become violent, the masters of the Ragusan vessels, and the French caravа-

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neurs, of vessels trading in the *Mediterranean*, after having put out every anchor and cable they had, took to their boats and fled to the nearest shore, leaving their vessels to their chance in the storm.

"On the other hand, the British, Danish, Swedish, and Dutch navigators of the *ocean*, no sooner saw the storm beginning, than they left their houses, took to their boats, and went all hands on board. Some pointed their yards to the wind, and others lowered them upon deck. Afterwards they walked to and fro on their quarter-deck with perfect composure, and bid defiance to the storm. Not one man of these stirred from the ships, till calm weather, on the morrow, called upon them to assist their feeble and more unfortunate brethren, whose ships were wrecked and lay scattered on the shore." Bruce's Travels to discover the source of the Nile, vol. I. p. 8. 4th Edit.

The only nurseries of efficient seamen to the enemy are Holland and the north of France, and how limited are these when contrasted with ours?—with our coal trade, our fisheries, our East-country navigation, our coasting trade along the whole of England, Scotland and Ireland! Besides, our central position will always enable us to fight our enemies in detail. During twelve years of war, the Dutch have never been able to send a single ship of the line round to Brest, for their only mode of doing it is by the dangerous circuit of the North. If we consider it worth while to oppose the egress of the enemy's fleets from the Mediterranean, have we not

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the means by stationing a squadron at Gibraltar? But supposing the enemy to have assembled from all quarters, sixty, eighty, or even a hundred sail of the line in Brest harbour, what would be his prospect of success in battle from this mixed assemblage? A British admiral, with one half their numbers, would take his chance of fighting them; with two thirds he would beat them, and with equal forces he would answer for their total destruction. On the one side there would be a confused mass of different nations, unpractised in naval manœuvres—on the other a firm, united force, rapid in movement, and matchless in close encounter. The auspicious discovery of the plan of forcing the enemy to close action by breaking their line, has more than doubled our maritime superiority. This plan puts an end to all evasive manœuvres, and leads immediately to that direct trial of skill and courage, in which it seems the birthright of our countrymen to be irresistible. Our enemies dare never attempt this decisive manœuvre, and in our hands it has never failed. So long therefore as we preserve that happy constitution, which makes us a free and a brave people, so long shall we preserve the empire of the sea against France and her allies, against Europe and the world.

Those who are apprehensive of the consequences of peace would do well to look back to former periods of our history, and see how often we have experienced the same terrors. One hundred and twenty years ago, Louis XIV. had the greatest marine in Eu-

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rope; his ships were better built and more numerous than our's, but the battle of La Hogue put in one day an end to his hopes. His power by land was nearly as formidable to the rest of Europe, as that of Bonaparte is at present. He had four hundred thousand men on foot, and the Emperor of Germany was his only antagonist; for Russia at that time was almost unknown. While France was thus over grown, we saw Spain about to be governed by a branch of the same family. We thought our ruin inevitable, and we fought eleven years to avert it. At last we agreed to make peace, and to sanction the connection between France and Spain. In every succeeding war, Spain has sooner or later taken part with France against us. And to what has her hostility led, except to an extension of our success? In her alliance with Spain, therefore, France now possesses no more than she has had for a century. "But she has likewise acquired Italy and Holland."—Italy is remote from us, and her possession will not influence the fate of empires. In regard to Holland, it would be wrong to conceal from ourselves that its conquest has given the French three roadsteads, Flushing, Helvoet and the Texel; and that formerly the French had not to the north of Brest a single harbour fit for the reception of a ship of the line. It is equally true, that if invasion be ever tried, the probability is that the principal attempt will be made from Holland. But the inference regards not our navy but our army. If we desire complete security, we must *essentially reform the constitution of our army;* but as to our navy, the only danger from inva-

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sion, whether from Holland or elsewhere will be, lest our enemies should be so fortunate as to elude us.

It is well to remind those persons who would have us continue at war with Bonaparte because he is tyrannical, that those very acts of his which most excite our resentment, afford a certainty that the countries subject to his sway will continue unable to cope with us. Instead of giving a free constitution to these countries, he has absorbed all power in himself and his family. His policy is not to appeal to the generous feelings of mankind, in which alone are the sources of national greatness—his aim is to carry every point by menace and compulsion. He will bear no contradiction; he will listen to no conciliating adjustments between his own will and the wishes of his inferiors; his conduct throughout bespeaks the arbitrary habits of a soldier inflated by success, and impelled by inherent violence of temper. Such a character, while it excites our hatred, affords us the consolatory assurance that the power which it establishes will not be durable, because that power is reared not on the solid interests of the people, but on selfish views of personal aggrandizement.

It may be said, however, that although England is independent of France, the Continent is subject to her rule—that she has humbled Austria, dismembered Prussia, and intimidated even Russia. True, but a continuance of the Continental war, offered at present, no prospect of retrieving these disasters. Every battle

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of the last campaign has shown the superiority of the Russian soldiers over the French; but the inferiority of their officers has been equally visible. The same observation applies to almost all the unfortunate efforts of the Austrians. It is not that Austria and Russia want numbers, and still less that they want bravery, but wisdom is wanting in their councils, to give to that bravery a just direction. All Europe, except the Austrian Government, seemed to know that the cause of their reverses lay in the defects of their tactics; yet so blind was that Government, that after twelve years of experience, they entrust an army to General Mack. Surely while our Allies were thus infatuated, it was vain to desire a continuance of hostilities on their part against the vigour of a revolutionary government. Much better had we urged them to forbear war, and to improve their resources in peace for a future contest under better auspices. We are at last awakened to this truth, though many of us think that we have learned it too late. But it is not too late. Austria has twenty millions of subjects, and may double both the number and the resources of her armies by persevering in a liberal and enlightened policy. Russia is of all countries that which would gain most rapidly by a similar system.

The opinion which has lately become so prevalent that Russia will continue to lean to the side of France is no less groundless than our other apprehensions. Russia can never become a great maritime power; and England, on the other hand, will never be the rival of

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Russia in the commonwealth of Europe. But France will not only have an opposite interest to Russia in the general affairs of the Continent; she has also a direct subject of contention in the spoils of Turkey. Whatever be the future conduct of these two powers—whether in deference to England, and from dread of each other, they refrain at present from the partition; or whether, as is less likely, they make a temporary agreement and divide the prey—in either case, the Turkish dominions will be a permanent source of hatred between France and Russia, and a consequent bond of amity between Russia and England.—Austria, in like manner, is the natural ally of England, and the inveterate enemy of France. If you wish to appreciate her strength, read Clairfait's campaign of 1795, and see what wonders the Austrians are capable of performing when ably commanded. If you doubt the prowess of the Russians, study the battles of the last campaign from Pultusk to Friedland; in spite of the ignorance of their officers and the smallness of their numbers, they appear to have defeated the French in every action except the last. All these facts lead to this conclusion—under present circumstances a contest by land against France is a vain effort, but if Austria and Russia will do in tranquillity what France has done in commotion, that is, if they will draw forth the talents of their subjects, and give to merit what they have hitherto given to favour and to rank, they may bid defiance to France and disdain her controul. So great a change, however, from inveterate customs could not be produced by a sudden effort. Reverses

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in war were necessary to inculcate its necessity, and the repose of peace is requisite to accomplish its execution.

The late arrangements of France on the Continent evidently increase her power during Bonaparte's lifetime, but they do not lay the seeds of future Empire. Italy and Germany have long been, on account of their division into numberless principalities, the scene of oppression to their inhabitants, the source of wars to Europe. The policy of Bonaparte has been to extinguish the smaller and aggrandize the greater powers. Italy is now almost entirely comprehended in two kingdoms, and Germany, instead of an infinity of petty states, presents the efficient governments of Saxony, Bavaria, Westphalia and Wirtemberg. Had these changes been accomplished by the Emperor of Germany, should we not have rejoiced at events which thus converted weakness into strength? The day is not far distant when these governments will be desirous to shake off the controul of France. Throughout all these countries the French name is detested; every thing in their customs, their language, their prejudices, is adverse to an incorporation with their Gallic neighbours. The terror of Bonaparte's name, and of five hundred thousand soldiers will restrain them for a while, but the influence of these causes is temporary, while the operation of opposite causes is lasting.

Even in its more immediate effects, the policy of Bonaparte will often be found to lead to results

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very different from what he contemplates. By taking Poland from Prussia, and giving it to Saxony, he considers that he has weakened an enemy and strengthened a friend. Now this conduct has all the evils of a half measure. By this act, he has not only lost the attachment of the Poles, who hailed him as the restorer of their independence—he has also indissolubly united Austria and Russia. Without venturing to proclaim the liberty of the Poles, he has done enough to awaken the fears of both these Empires, for he has told them that he waits only a fair opportunity to add Gallicia and Lithuania to the Dutchy of Warsaw.

Having thus taken a view of the effects of peace on the Continent, let us turn to the still more important consideration of its influence on our commerce and manufactures. Here we may confidently anticipate the happiest consequences, for our success in these respects will depend, not on the doubtful wisdom of foreign cabinets, but on our own industry and energy. All we want for the prosperous exercise of that industry, is an ample field, and this field will be afforded us by peace. A most erroneous notion has prevailed, that since the beginning of the last war we have engrossed the commerce of the world; and that at a peace we should be obliged to forego a great part of this extended traffic. These singular illusions have arisen from our naval preponderance, and from believing, that because the mercantile marine of the nations at war with us had disappeared, it was therefore extinct. But we do not advert to the unfortunate truth, that our own mercantile shipping is in a state

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of rapid decrease;* and to the still more conclusive fact, that the mercantile marine of our enemies navigates the ocean under neutral colours. On a late occasion, the House of Commons learnt with no small surprise, that soon after the beginning of the present war, the French mercantile marine was sold, or rather made over to the Americans, on condition of being employed under the American flag during war, and of being resold to the French shipowners, within twelve months after the conclusion of peace.† So far from engrossing the commerce of the world, during war, our industry is subject to restraints, both from taxes, and from interruption of intercourse with foreign countries, which would prove fatal to the industry of any other nation. Our navy commands the ocean, but can our navy open to our manufactures the markets of Spain, Germany, and France? If we consult our past experience, we shall find our fears as unfounded in regard to our commercial as to our military situation. We were afraid to terminate hostilities in 1748, yet in the peace which followed the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, short as it was, our manufactures and navigation flourished beyond all former example, and our government was enabled to lower the interest of our national debt. In the war of 1756, we took several of the enemy's colonies, and obtained the most glorious successes. The peace of 1763 was at first very unpopular, yet this peace, inadequate as it was termed, proved a grateful relief from an into-

* See the end of the Appendix.

† Evidence of Mr. Wilson before the West-India Committee in July, 1807.

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lerable burden. At the peace of 1783, both we and other nations thought that the loss of America, and the accumulation of our debt, had sunk us to the rank of a second-rate power. Yet no sooner was tranquillity restored, than the universal prosperity of the kingdom evinced that all we wanted, was that scope for our industry which peace alone can give. It is important to compare the value of our yearly exports since that period, agreeably to the Custom-house returns to Parliament. They are as follows:

Total value of exports from Great-Britain, in the following years, agreeable to official returns from the Custom-House to Parliament:

In the Year	Foreign and Colonial Produce.	British Manufactures.	Total.
1785	4,742,000	11,082,000	15,824,000
1786	4,270,000	11,830,000	16,100,000
1787	4,606,000	12,053,000	16,659,000
1788	4,517,000	12,724,000	17,241,000
1789	5,379,000	13,779,000	19,158,000
1790	4,979,000	14,921,000	19,900,000
1791	5,670,000	16,810,000	22,480,000
1792	6,129,000	18,336,000	24,465,000
1793	5,784,000	13,892,000	19,676,000
1794	8,886,000	16,725,000	25,111,000
1795	8,509,000	16,527,000	25,036,000
1796	8,923,000	19,102,000	28,025,000
1797	9,412,000	16,903,000	26,315,000
1798	10,617,000	19,672,000	30,289,000
1799	9,556,000	24,084,000	33,640,000
1800	13,815,000	24,304,000	38,119,000
1801	12,087,000	25,699,000	37,786,000
1802	14,418,000	26,993,000	41,411,000
1803	9,326,000	22,252,000	31,578,000
1804	10,515,000	23,935,000	34,450,000
1805	9,950,000	25,003,000	34,953,000

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It appears from this interesting document, that from 1785 to 1793, when the war broke out, the commerce of Great Britain was not only on the increase; but that the ratio of that increase was augmenting every year. For instance, the excess of 1786 above 1785, was three hundred thousand pounds; but the excess of 1791 above 1790, was more than two millions. Had peace continued, our exports would have increased, not only by two millions a year, as in 1791 and 1792—but by a *ratio progressively augmenting*. But what was the consequence of war? In the first year of war, (1793,) our exports are lessened at once by five millions, and although this diminution is afterwards made up, the ratio of the peace increase was never recovered. Supposing we had continued at peace, and that our increase of exports had been only two millions each year, as was the case in 1791 and 1792, the state of our exports would have been as follows:

For 1793 . .	26,500,000	1800 . . 40,500,000
1794 . .	28,500,000	1801 . . 42,500,000
1795 . .	30,500,000	1802 . . 44,500,000
1796 . .	32,500,000	1803 . . 46,500,000
1797 . .	34,500,000	1804 . . 48,500,000
1798 . .	36,500,000	1805 . . 50,500,000
1799 . .	38,500,000	

So that upon this moderate calculation, the amount of our yearly exports would have been sixteen millions greater than they are now. But these sixteen

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millions are official value, and in computing custom-house returns, it is customary to add sixty per cent. for the difference between the real and official value. Had we therefore continued at peace, instead of an apparent increase in our exports of sixteen millions, we should have had a real increase of twenty-five millions!

Another striking circumstance is exhibited by this table of official facts. Look at the only year of peace which we have enjoyed since the commencement of this tedious contest; the year 1802. In that year our exports made a sudden start of nearly four millions above the preceding year of war. Look next at the immediately succeeding year of war. Our exports that year suddenly fell nearly ten millions below those of the preceding year of peace. Observe too, what has been their condition since that time. They have not yet risen to the amount which they had attained in the year of war preceding the peace of Amiens. So that since the year 1800, our commerce has been worse than stationary—it has been retrograde.

But it may be said that by a peace France will gain as well as England, and that in the course of time they will rival us in commercial greatness. Such has been our apprehension during two hundred years. Every writer on commerce during that period will be found to inculcate the melancholy doctrine, that the price of labour was not half so great in France as in England, and that on a peace the French would take our manufac-

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tures out of our hands. Yet it so happens that the French manufactures are at present much farther behind our's than they were a century ago; and if we do not ruin our people by excessive taxation, we may defy the competition of the French for ten centuries to come. Commercial industry is not their characteristic; their exertions are short and transient; they are altogether incapable of that indefatigable perseverance which alone is the source of fortune. A Frenchman works during the morning to provide for the pleasures of the evening; in the evening he enjoys himself, and ridicules the idea of hard labour and careful economy.—Such is the character of the nation; what will be the plan of their government at a peace? The re-conquest of St. Domingo will be their first object, and I do not over-rate the difficulty of that re-conquest, by computing that it will cost Bonaparte two years' time and the lives of fifty thousand soldiers. After all, what will he acquire?—a land without labourers or habitations—a mere wilderness which ten years of peace and industry will not restore to its former prosperity. Those who know experimentally the slow progress of West-India properties will assign at least twenty years to the accomplishment of this most difficult object. But supposing that in ten years St. Domingo is restored to its former prosperity, will Bonaparte and the French nation then be disposed to quarrel with us? No; they will have only then began to taste the sweets of peace, and they know that the hostility of our navy will strip them in ten months of the fruits of the labour of as many years.

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We may thus rest assured, that our insular situation, our happy constitution, our unrivalled industry, will give us a permanent superiority in navigation and commerce over France. But it is by no means our interest to ruin the trade of France. On the contrary, should we not desire that she possessed sufficient wealth to enable her to pay us for the manufactures which she buys from us, and which nothing but want of money will prevent her from buying in larger quantities? Without resorting at present to the infallible laws of political economy, I will merely put it to the good sense of the British merchant, whether it is not as desirable to rank the French and Spaniards among our customers as other nations; and whether their custom is worth having, if they cannot pay us? To what was owing the surprising rise in our exports of 1802, but to orders from France, and with what other country was our intercourse formerly so lucrative?

I have thus endeavoured to show, that although the present state of the Continent offers no prospect of successful resistance to the power of France, its future condition is not hopeless; that notwithstanding present appearances, Russia will be in future the sincere Ally of England and Austria, and the sworn enemy of France; and that a wise administration of the resources of Austria and Russia is alone wanting to enable them to vindicate the independence of Eu-

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rope. But as the reform of inveterate abuses is a gradual and arduous work, the security of peace is indispensable to its performance. If peace is necessary to the Continent, why should *we* continue at war? We cannot change the French government by war, and every other object we can obtain by a peace. It has been shown by the evidence of the late negociation that we may make a highly honourable and advantageous treaty; and it appears from the records of the last twenty years, as well as from the whole of our history, that peace is extremely favourable to our commerce and navigation. In neither of these respects is there any danger that France can rival us. Her traders possess neither the capital nor the industry of our merchants; and the seamen they may train can be no match for the hardy mariners of our boisterous coasts. When we speak of the uncertain continuance of peace, we little know how averse the French nation always is to a war with England. How can it be otherwise? this is our seventh war with them since the accession of King William, and in every successive struggle they have smarted under the lash of our navy—their ships of war have been regularly destroyed, and their merchantmen as regularly captured. In the middle of the last century indeed, they had contrived a system of naval tactics calculated to elude a close encounter of fleets, and our successes, for a time, were confined to actions between single ships. But since the memorable 12th of April, an end has been put to evasive manœuvres, and he who will not fight cannot hope to escape. Our ancestors used to

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combat their antagonists for three days, but a naval action now scarcely lasts as many hours; and a single day may now cause as much destruction among our enemies as we were formerly able to accomplish during a whole war.

While we have these ample grounds of security in peace, there are other circumstances which urgently call for a cessation of war. The navigation of the whole world is passing into the hands of neutrals. They conduct not only the carrying trade of Europe, but they surpass the number of British shipping in the seas of India and China. The trade between Britain and North America, between North America and the West-Indies, between Britain and Europe, from Memel to Constantinople—all is conducted by neutral shipping. Such are the consequences of a war of fifteen years. We may sympathise with the hardships of our shipowners, and *force* a part of our trade to be carried in British shipping; but the relief will be inadequate; our merchants will complain of these restraints; and we will learn at last that there is no effectual remedy but peace.

It is surprizing to what a degree even the ships of our navy have suffered from the waste of war. Mr. Pitt conceived it his duty, in February 1804, to let Parliament know the decay which always takes place after a long continuance of hostilities. During war the King's shipwrights are employed in repairs; and scarcely any new ships are built, except in the

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merchant yards. But the expence of repairing an old ship is generally much greater than that of building a new one. At present, however, we have no alternative; we cannot wait till new ships are built and seasoned, and we must go on in a ruinous course of perpetual repairs. Such indeed is the state of our navy, that it will become the duty of the Admiralty, to lay down at least twenty sail of the line the first year of peace.

Another, and a much stronger motive for peace is the depressed condition of the lower orders. The rise in the wages of labour since 1793, although considerable in London, in Scotland, and in a few parts of England, has by no means kept pace on the whole with the amazing enhancement of provisions. It is a melancholy truth, that the official return made to the House of Commons in 1803, stated that no less than twelve hundred thousand inhabitants of England and Wales (one-eighth of the whole population) were dependent on their parishes for relief. We have since had four years of war, and every year their number has increased. All this misery is the consequence, more or less direct, of the innumerable evils of war —and particularly of the decay of many manufactures, the pressure of taxes, the rigour of the ballot; in short, of a general disproportion between the earnings and the wants of the people. 'Is this a state of society fitted to preserve the characteristic spirit of the English commonalty?—a spirit which has long been the boast of our country, and which in the

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present age of rapid conquests, and of revolutionary horrors, has constituted the safeguard of the higher classes of the kingdom, and supplied the only engine which has been successfully wielded against the arms of France.

If we look to the burdens of taxation on the middling classes, we shall find them scarcely less oppressive. The time is come when instead of perpetuating the war-taxes, or of laying on new impositions, the attention of Government should be most anxiously directed to a gradual diminution of those taxes, (such as the tonnage duty) which threaten our national prosperity in its source. It is obvious, that the means of this diminution will never be found in war, but in peace the increase of our exports would supply a surplus of which the yearly augmentation would surprise ourselves, as was the case after the American war, and even in the short interval of peace in 1802.

It is in peace alone that the interests of Ireland can be completely identified with those of England, and the evils removed which unhappily prevent that fertile island from adding to the energy of the Empire. Are you afraid to make peace with France on account of her aggrandizement since the Revolution? To attempt the reduction of that aggrandizement will be a fruitless struggle; and of all the territory she has gained, Holland is the only possession which affects us. Do you think that in the next war, invasion may be attempted from the Dutch ports?—In that case,

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strengthen your military force, not by augmenting its numbers, but by improving its constitution. Do you fear the acquisition of able seamen which the enemy has made by the possession of Holland?—Increase then the number of your own seamen, by encouraging your inexhaustible fisheries on the coasts of Scotland and Ireland.

I would recommend to those who persist in considering a peace with France as impolitic, to read Mr. Pitt's speech on the peace of Amiens.* They will find it begin with an explicit declaration, that "after the dissolution of the confederacy of the States of Europe, the question of peace or war between Great Britain and France became a question of *terms* only." When treating of the continuance of the war, he adds "that he did not know a more fatal error, than to look only at one object and obstinately to pursue it, when the hope of accomplishing it no longer remained." Of the gloomy apprehension from the power of France, he said that "when her territorial acquisitions were considered on the one hand, it was but fair on the other, to consider what she had lost in population, in commerce, in capital, and in habits of industry. The Union with Ireland has added more to the strength of the British empire than all the conquests of France."

But of all points connected with the question of peace, the most important is the character of the man

* Cobbett's Debates, 3d of November, 1801.

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who holds the destiny of the Continent in his hands. The more we reflect on his disposition, the more we shall be convinced of his solicitude to preserve tranquillity with us. If we refer to Lord Whitworth's interview with him in February 1803, we shall find him much less intemperate than our heated imaginations at that time pictured him. "He acknowledged * that the irritation he felt against England increased daily, because every wind which blew from England, brought nothing but enmity and hatred against him.—If he had not felt the enmity of the British government on every occasion since the treaty of Amiens, there would have been nothing that he would not have done to prove his desire to conciliate; participation in indemnities as well as in influence on the Continent; treaties of commerce, in short, any thing that could have given satisfaction, and have testified his friendship. Nothing, however, had been able to conquer the hatred of the British government, and therefore it was now come to the point, whether we should have peace or war. To preserve peace, the Treaty of Amiens must be fulfilled; the abuse in the public prints, if not totally suppressed, at least kept within bounds, *and confined to the English papers;* and the protection so openly given to his bitterest enemies, (alluding to Georges and persons of that description,) must be withdrawn." There is nothing violent in these expressions, but a still more instructive conclusion may be drawn from Bonaparte's language, when under the immediate influence of passion. Observe

* Official Papers, page 57.

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the effect which the warlike message to Parliament on the 8th of March produced upon him "At the court which was held on Sunday at the Thuilleries, (says Lord Whitworth, in his letter to Lord Hawkesbury of the 14th of March,) he accosted me evidently under very considerable agitation. He began by asking me if I had any news from England? I told him that I had received letters from your Lordship two days ago. He immediately said, "And so you are determined to go to war?" "No," I replied, "we are too sensible of the advantages of peace." "Nous avons," said he, "deja fait la guerre pendant quinze ans." As he seemed to wait for an answer, I observed only, "C'en est deja trop." "Mais," said he, "vous voulez la faire encore quinze années et vous m'y forçez." I told him that was very far from his Majesty's intention.—He began again: "Pourquoi des armémens? contre qui des mésures de précaution? Je n'ai pas un seul vaisseau de ligne dans les ports de France; mais si vous voulez armer, j'armerai aussi; si vous voulez vous battre, je me battrai aussi. Vous pourrez peutêtre tuer la France, mais jamais l'intimider." This is certainly not the language of a man who desires war, but of a man who is mortified and enraged to find himself involved in it. The subsequent effusions of his fury against us since the war took place, need not surprise us, when we consider the temper of the man, and the vast injury we have done to him. But the anger of a passionate man is proverbially of short duration. The resentment of Bonaparte will cease with our hostility, and if we

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discover a conciliating disposition, his vanity will stimulate him to take every possible step to attract our approbation. He knows we are the only free nation in Europe, and he would account the acquisition of our esteem, a prouder triumph than all his victories.

To those who have sworn perpetual enmity to him, and who consider him incapable of a generous feeling, I would say, "Whatever may be the depravity of his character, he is the Sovereign of France, and you cannot dethrone him. War is therefore unavailing, and for any other purpose it is unnecessary, because he offers you the objects for which you went to war. —You distrust his good faith. I do not ask you to rely on it; but to improve your army, and to keep sixty thousand seamen in pay. You consider him a tyrant. It is for the French nation to decide by whom they shall be governed. It is not for us to interfere —for us, who are the inhabitants of a free country, the subjects of a beneficent Sovereign. But you detest him, because he has committed crimes at which humanity revolts—he has wasted the lives of myriads in battle—he has stooped to secret assassination.—I answer.—To avenge such crimes belongs not to us, but to Providence. While we stamp them with merited reprobation, let us pity the frenzy which has plunged him into such horrors in the visionary pursuits of ambition; and which renders him, whose outward splendour is envied by the Universe, the most unhappy of mankind in the hour of retirement."

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RESOLUTIONS.

At a General Meeting of the West-India Planters *and* Merchants, *held at the London Tavern, on Thursday, the 26th of February, 1807, the following Resolutions were unanimously agreed to.*

THAT the naval power and flourishing state of these kingdoms are intimately connected with the fate of the British West-India colonies; and that the decline of these colonies will materially and speedily diminish the quantity of British shipping, the consumption of British manufactures; and in proportion as each of these contributes to employment and revenue at home, will increase the burthens of taxes and poor-rates on the landed interest of Great Britain.

That it appears, from authentic documents on the table of the Commons House of Parliament, that the quantity of British shipping, employed in the colonial trade, amounted, in the year 1804-5, to 837 ships, containing 236,510 tons.

That the number of seamen navigating the same was 17,680.

That the value of British and Irish produce and manufactures, exported directly to the colonies, was £5,495,770.

That the value of colonial produce, the fruit of British industry, imported into the united kingdom from those colonies, was £7,002,117; of which there was a re-export of raw and manufactured goods to the amount of £13,991,397 official value, which is principally paid to us by foreigners, and forms a most important article in the balance of trade, and in obtaining a favourable course of exchange.

That these grand sources of national power and prosperity are necessarily derived from, and cannot

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long survive, the stable condition of the British planters or growers of colonial produce, whose stability can alone be maintained, by assuring to them a fair and reasonable return for their capital and risk. And, though all consideration of individual justice were, by an anomaly in British legislation, disregarded in their instance, yet policy alone would require immediate and effectual redress for the grievances which now bear down a body of men, who contribute more largely, in proportion, than any other class, to the revenue and prosperity of the state.

That the excessive taxation upon colonial produce has, for some years past, been gradually absorbing the fair profits of the planter. So that, while every other species of property has nearly, and in some instances more than doubled in value within the last 20 years, that of the planter alone has progressively diminished. And though the effect of this taxation, upon the grower of produce in the dominions of the crown, was not for a time distinctly perceived, yet at length it was both seen and felt, even while this country had still the command of the foreign market; but, as soon as that command ceased, and the means of exportation were checked by the success of the enemy on the continent, so as to throw back on the home-market a quantity of produce greatly exceeding its ordinary demand, the whole weight of taxation, which, when imposed, was assumed to fall upon the consumer, was thrown immediately and altogether upon the grower, who cannot, by any sudden change of culture, escape or diminish its operation: and this, together with the increased expenses of colonial stores, manufactures, freight, and insurance, has already began, and, unless soon relieved, must rapidly tend, to break up the very sources of production.

That the magnitude of the evil to the British colonist, arising from the excessive accumulation of colonial produce, compelled to be brought to the home-market, without any vent for it, greatly increased as it is, by the addition of the produce of the con-

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quered colonies, cannot, in any material degree, be relieved by the grant of the proposed bounty on the export of refined sugar, or by a limited and scanty bounty on raw-sugar, whenever exported from the warehouses at most disadvantageous prices; or by an accommodation of the warehousing-system to refined sugar, which can only have effect if an actual and extensive export be in prospect: however well adapted and judiciously applied such remedies may be to certain states of the market, favourable to a balancing competition, either at home or abroad. As collateral aids, indeed, they would be good, but as sole or principal expedients, under the existing circumstances, their application must be inadequate to the end proposed.

For, while the foreign market is either wholly and forcibly denied to us, or more advantageously supplied without our intervention, and while the home market remains so greatly overstocked, the relief to be derived from such circuitous remedies must, if they operate at all, be distant and very much diminished in value before they can reach the planter, who is the party acknowledged to be sinking under his present burthens, and who requires prompt and efficacious relief to save him.

That the only modes by which relief can reach the planter are,

First.—By taking measures, such as our naval superiority enables us to do, to exclude the produce of inimical colonies from the foreign markets.

Secondly.—By materially increasing the home-consumption.

Thirdly.—By a reduction of duties on our colonial produce, and on the tonnage of British shipping.

All these measures may go hand in hand, and would mutually assist each other; or,

Fourthly.—By giving to our own colonies the same benefit of direct foreign export which shall be allowed to the enemy's colonies.

That the first of these modes may be carried into

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effect by declaring all the enemy's colonies in a state of blockade, and availing ourselves of the superiority, valour, and skill, of the British navy, to prevent, at the peril of capture and confiscation, any of his produce from being carried to market; thereby confining the carriage of all colonial produce to British shipping, extending its employment, and preventing the capture, if any, of the enemy's colonies from being absolutely noxious, as it now is, to the interest of the British colonies. Besides the advantage of interesting a large party among our enemies, in the exception of colonial produce from the rigour of commercial exclusion from the continent.

The Second.—By increasing the consumption of colonial produce; which may be effectually done by confining the public distilleries to the exclusive use of sugar, and by permitting its use in the breweries upon fair terms with malt.

That, in suggesting these measures, the British colonists, though strictly entitled to the same justice and protection as all other subjects of the realm, do not desire or conceive themselves entitled to ask any partial benefit to themselves, to the detriment of the landed interest of Great Britain, whose permanent prosperity they consider as identified with their own. But they entertain a confident persuasion, that not only the measure of opening the breweries and distilleries to them may be taken without prejudice to the growers of barley and other grain, but with positive advantage to those, if, as the British colonists venture to suggest, the free export of grain to the British West-Indies were at the same time allowed; subject only to restrictions of the last necessity, such as would, in similar cases, be applied to the use of grain in the distilleries. By which means too, an increased carrying-trade would be opened to British shipping, of the greatest consequence to the power and strength of the country: and thus every part of the British dominions would be bound together by a greater conformity of interests, would be rendered more independent of

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the circumstances of the war, and better able to sustain the probable duration and burthen of it.

They venture to suggest also, that such a change of system cannot be made under any circumstances at less risk, and with more probable advantage to the landed interest, than by a country importing annually great quantities of corn*, much of which is drawn from places in the possession, or under the direct influence, of the enemy, who derives resources from this traffic, while he excludes the counterchange of commodities. For either a new stimulus will be given to British agriculture, by opening to it a new and certain market of great extent, and thereby giving increased employment to British shipping; or, at the worst, the necessity of such large importations from the enemy's country will in part be superseded, and the price of grain kept up to any amount, which Parliament may deem necessary, to give an ample and just return to the farmer for his capital and labour. And in neither case will the revenue be so much impaired, if at all, as it must necessarily be, if adequate redress be denied to the British colonists; since there will either be sugar, or sugar and corn, enough to supply the existing amount or duties, as well those arising from the public breweries and distilleries, as from the ordinary consumption of the raw and refined article; besides the probability of saving the proposed bounties in whole, or in part, to be granted on the exportation of the latter.

That, in pursuing the same patriotic system, the increased sale of rum, hitherto manifesly discouraged, would supersede, in a great degree, the importation of brandies, one of the staple commodities of the enemy's country; the increased consumption of which, in the British navy, is humbly represented to be no less impolitic in a national, than it is unjust to the

* In 1805, there were imported into Great Britain,

Barley.	Oats.	Wheat.	Flour.
qrs.	qrs.	qrs.	cwt.
44,567.	461,249.	899,856.	73,423.

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British planter in a colonial, view; infringing, as it does, the fair principle of reciprocal monopoly and consumption between the mother-country and its colonies.

That it would also be easy to shew the superior policy of encouraging the internal consumption of our own coffee, as a popular beverage, wholesome, strengthening, and exhilarating; the prime-cost of which, remaining with British subjects, would add to our circulating capital at home.

Thirdly.—By a reduction of duties.

That the extent of such a reduction would depend upon the extent to which either or both of the two former modes of relief were acted upon. If both were carried into full effect, it is probable that no reduction of duties might be necessary during the war: and it is even possible, that, by the saving of drawbacks and bounties, by means of the increased internal consumption of colonial produce, and by the improvement of the incomes of the great body of proprietors residing at home, the defalcation of the malt-duties might be more than compensated to the public revenue.

For, it is a principle unquestionable, that, by any reduction of duties, effecting a proportionate increase of internal consumption, the revenue cannot be a loser: whereas, by persisting in the present extravagant duties, without a regular and wide channel of export, it is absolutely certain that there must be a great defalcation of the revenue. For, if the justice of the country do not induce a relaxation of the duties in ease of the exhausted planters, which in no probable state of circumstances, as matters now stand, can be thrown upon the consumer in any material degree, if at all; it is plain that the former, who are utterly unable to bear the present ruinous load of taxation, must lessen the production of the commodities themselves, until the demand and supply again find their natural level; in the course of effecting which, many of them must come to ruin, and in the

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mean time the contributions of all to the property-tax must be for the most part withdrawn.

Fourthly.—That the only alternative, the very suggestion of which is of itself the most powerful of all arguments for the adoption of the preceding measures, which, as being more consistent with the sound principles of national policy, have been in preference proposed; an alternative which must be attributed to the imperious necessity of the case, in order to save the British colonist from impending ruin, if other means be denied; is, that, during the war, if it shall be deemed necessary or politic to deliver over to neutral flags the carrying colonial trade of the enemy, the same benefit of a direct export to foreign markets, in neutral bottoms, may be allowed to our own suffering and unoffending colonists as shall be conceded to those of the enemy.

For, it is self-evident that no possible benefit can accrue to this country from compelling the increasing accumulation of colonial produce at home, where it has no vent, and must deteriorate from day to day, or be made away with at a positive loss to the grower. Injustice so glaring would defeat its own purpose. Such a result would leave to the colonist no prospect but despair; to the government, nothing but repentance too late.

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REPORT

Of the Sugar Distillery Committee, ordered to be printed 17th February, 1807.

The Committee appointed to consider of the Expediency of permitting the use of Sugar or Melasses in the Distillery and Brewery, for a time to be limited, under the circumstances now affecting the Trade of the British Colonies in the West-Indies; and to report the same, with their Observations and Opinions thereupon, from time to time, to the House; and who were empowered to report the Minutes of the Evidence taken before them:—

HAVE proceeded to examine the matter referred to them. They have thought it their duty to consider, in the first place, how far the introduction of sugar or melasses, either by themselves, or mixed with grain, at the discretion of the Manufacturer, would (supposing no material objection to appear to the measure) have the effect of affording to the West-Indian trade such relief as its present situation may require; the accounts laid before the Committee, shew, that on the 31st December 1806, there were in the Warehouses of the West-India Docks, or on board ships actually within the Docks, or on their Wharfs, 87,915 packages, making in the whole 991,118 cwt. of sugar, a larger quantity by 262,800 cwt. than was in the Docks on the corresponding day of December 1805, and by 27,205 cwt. than on the corresponding day of December 1804; it also appears that there were, on the 31st December 1806, remaining on hand in the out-ports, 472,984 cwt. of sugar, a larger quantity by 121,298 cwt. than were on hand in the

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same places on the corresponding day of 1805, and by 338,839 cwt. than on the corresponding day of 1804.

There seems no ground whatever to believe that this increased quantity of sugar in hand is owing to any cause except the diminution of the demand, both for raw and refined sugars, of the growth of the British colonies, for foreign markets. The West-Indian planters and merchants have at the same time to contend against reduced and falling prices, unaccompanied by any diminution of duties, risk, or expence. The average charge on every cwt. of sugar shipped from our West-Indian colonies, over and above any amount received from rum, including every annual contingent expence attending the estate upon which it is raised, but exclusive of any charge for the purchase of negroes, for the waste or interest of capital, exclusive also of all the mercantile charges which take place after the shipment of the sugar, and of any return or compensation for the capital embarked in the estate, appears to be in Jamaica 21*s.* and 6*d.* per cwt., and in the Leeward Islands, in no case, upon an average, below 20*s.*, and in many cases much more. The average mercantile charges upon every cwt. of British colony sugar shipped from the West-Indies, including the average rate of freight, insurance, port and sale charges, and mercantile commission, are 16*s.* per cwt. from Jamaica, and 15*s.* and 6*d.* per cwt. from the Leeward Islands; the duty is 27*s.* per cwt., consequently the whole charges attaching upon the cwt. of sugar, including the expences of its growth and manufacture in the island, its transport from thence, the duty and mercantile charges upon it when brought for sale to the port of London is £3. 4*s.* 6*d.* on Jamaica sugar, and £3. 2*s.* 6*d.* on the sugar from the Leeward Islands at the lowest average. The average prices of sugar in the London market, as they appear in the London Gazette for the four months preceding the 5th of January 1807, were, exclusive of duty, 40*s.* 7½*d.* per cwt.; for the three months preceding the same period 39*s.* 5½*d.* per cwt., and for the week preceding the 31st of December 38*s.* 1½*d* On reference to the quantities sold at the respective prices for the last three months, it appears that

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55,085 cwt. have been sold from 42*s.* to 60*s.* per cwt. 315,977 cwt. from 60*s.* to 70*s.*, and 86,156 cwt. from 70*s.* to 88*s.* These prices include the duty. The result of this account strongly confirms the evidence before the Committee, which states the present demand to be chiefly for the stronger and high-priced sugars, leaving the market glutted with those of lower price and inferior quality, of which, if the usual proportion had been sold within the last three months, the average price appearing in the Gazette would have been considerably lower. It is also shewn in evidence before the committee, that the orders which are given at the present time by foreign houses for British plantation sugars are at very low prices, not exceeding 34*s.* the cwt. on board.

Such appears to be the state of the means which exist at this moment of selling one cwt. of sugar, compared with the expences attending its cultivation, and its passage to market. With respect to melasses, it appears that the price of this article, being one of considerable consumption amongst the poorer classes of the community, does not fluctuate in proportion to that of the sugar from whence it proceeds. The price at present is 27*s.* the cwt. and it is stated in evidence, that should its use be permitted in the breweries and distilleries, the price might increase 10*s.* the cwt. making, in that case, 37*s.* the cwt. It appears to the committee, that taking the present price of the quarter of malt, capable of producing 80lbs. of saccharine matter (which does not appear to be too large a proportion) at 82*s.* the quantity of sugar necessary to produce an equal proportion of saccharine matter must be 1 cwt. 3 qrs. 1 lb. which at 58*s.* per cwt. would amount to 101*s.* 6*d.* in price, making a difference in favour of the malt of 19*s.* 6*d.* in that given quantity; consequently, the price of sugar must be somewhat under 47*s.* per cwt. duty included, to meet the malt in the breweries at its present price per quarter. It is stated besides in evidence, that the beer produced from sugar, even if the prices would admit of it, is not equal in any degree to that produced by its equivalent quantity of malt, and consequently

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that the brewers would not use sugar in their manufactory, unless they were prevented by law from using grain, a measure which, in the present moment, the committee have it not in their contemplation to recommend. With respect to melasses, the case is somewhat different, although the committee are inclined to adopt a result similar to that proceeding, from their consideration of the propriety of permitting the use of sugar in the breweries. It appears, that of the two, melasses is the better article to mix with grain, or to use by itself, in the manufacture of beer, than sugar. The process of fire to which the melasses has been subjected, combined with other circumstances, produces a sounder extract from the former than from an equal quantity of the latter; still, however, the beer produced by a mixture, or by the sole use of melasses, is stated to be far inferior to that produced by malt alone. It having been before-mentioned, that melasses, now bearing a price of 27*s.* the cwt. might, should its use be permitted in the breweries or distilleries, rise 10*s.* the cwt. It is also stated, that unless melasses was worth 40*s.* the cwt. there would not be a sufficient inducement to the refiners to take any material quantity of sugar out of the market, as a strong temptation to them to purchase sugars would be the certainty of an increased demand, and consequently an augmented price for the melasses. When the use of grain in the distilleries was wholly and entirely stopped in 1799, the price of melasses then never rose higher than 45*s.* and, upon an average, was 40*s.* the cwt. The committee do not see much prospect that malssses, in consequence of a permission being given to use it in the distilleries or breweries at this season of the year, would rise to the price of 40*s.* which price is stated to be necessary for producing a greater consumption of sugars, seeing that even under an entire exclusion of grain in 1799, it did not more than attain it.

If the prospect attending the permission of the use of sugar and melasses in the breweries, does not by the evidence before the committee appear flattering, the in-

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document afforded them to recommend a similar permission in the distilleries are even less strong. Mr. Smith, a witness before the committee states, that in the year 1799, in consequence of the badness of the harvest, he had worked his distillery one season with sugar and grain together, and another season with sugar and melasses alone; the sugar he then used was worth in 1799, 68*s.* and 69*s.* the cwt. and was of a similar quality to that which, in the present state of the sugar market, is worth from 61*s.* to 63*s.* and for the malt he gave from 90*s.* to 95*s.* the quarter. It however appears, that taking barley at its present price of 44*s.* and malt at 81*s.* the quarter, the price of sugar should be from 32*s.* to 33*s.* the cwt. exduty, to induce the distiller to use that article in his trade; and that even then the spirit distilled would not be either intrinsically of so good a quality as that distilled from grain alone, or so disposable in the market. It should appear that to tempt the distiller to use melasses, it should, in order to bear a proportion to the above mentioned prices of grain and malt, bear the price of 24*s.* the cwt. and even then the melasses is considered a worse article in the distillery than the sugar. Even supposing the prices of the different articles above mentioned to be those which the committee have stated, the distillers would feel the greatest disinclination, at this season of the year, to break in upon the system on which their houses are at present worked. The distillers sell their grains to the keepers of cattle, or keep cattle themselves for the purpose of consuming them: one house alone at this moment feeds 520 head of cattle on their grains; the greater part of which cattle they must dispose of, and the men attending which they must discharge, before they could introduce the use of sugars or melasses into their manufactory. Supposing the price of sugar or melasses were to fall to that standard, at which it has been stated alone that they can be used in proportion to the present prices of grain and malt, the present season of the year appears to be peculiarly unfavourable to the experiment; a very large proportion of the distiller's annual stock is either worked up already, or provided for

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by the grain they have in hand. It does not appear probable that more than 12,000 hogsheads of sugar, even at the reduced prices above stated, would be taken out of the market by the permission being given at this time to the distillers to use that article in their trade, even if the use of grain was entirely prohibited; and the distillers in the country would probably, if it were not prohibited, persevere in the use of grain alone, as the manufacturers of Corn spirit would always obtain a preference in the sales over the manufactures of Spirits from melasses of sugar.

The committee have thought it their duty, in the second place, to consider the question so far as it may affect the revenue; and upon this point, the evidence of Mr. Jackson, confirmed by that of Mr. Benwell, appears conclusive. The duty upon malt is now 34*s.* 8*d.* the quarter, the duty upon one cwt. of sugar is as before stated, 27*s.* Supposing therefore, from 8olb. to 112lbs. of sugar to be equal to one quarter of malt for the purpose of the brewery, the loss to the revenue by the substitution of sugar for malt would be equal to 7*s.* 8*d.* for each cwt. of sugar used. If sugar and malt were allowed to be used indiscriminately in the brewing, the duties upon the two articles being different, the proportion of each must be defined, or immense fraud might be practised on the revenue. Sugar is very soon dissolved, and the worts from it are converted into beer much sooner than those from malt. The length of the operation of making beer being the great means of security to the revenue, by enabling the officers of the excise to pay a constant attention to the process, it is obvious, that the use of any article which would enable beer to be made and disposed of during the intervals between the visits of the officers of excise, would expose the revenue to considerable risk; and this danger would be increased, when it is recollected, that the permission to use sugar in the breweries would extend to 25,140 persons in England alone, who now are supposed to manufacture beer for sale, of whom about 23,740 are brewing victuallers, living scattered all over the kingdom, many of them at a distance from any office of excise. It appears almost impossible for the excise of-

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ficer, under any regulations, to prevent the substitution of melasses for sugar, and the objections which have been stated to the use of the latter apply, even with greater force, to that of the former article. The use of sugar of melasses in the distilleries appears to be impossible, unless that of grain is excluded. To Ireland and Scotland, it could not be extended without a complete revision of all the laws enacted for the security of the distillation of spirits. By no regulation could the use of sugar be permitted in the distilleries, even to the total prohibition of the use of grain, except at a loss to the revenue of about £115,000 annually, provided the distiller using sugar was enabled to carry on his trade with the same advantages he now possesses from using grain. Upon spirits made from melasses the loss would be still greater, because the duty on melasses wash at present is higher than that upon the wash from sugar; and it would be necessary, as appears by Mr. Jackson's evidence, that both should be reduced to an equal and lower rate. If the wash duty were reduced below its present rate, a bounty would thereby be given on the use of sugar. It is not however in the contemplation of the committee to recommend, at the present moment, the exclusion of grain from the distilleries, and the use of sugar mixed with grain exposes the revenue to considerable and inadmissible risk.—For the purpose of inducing the distiller to use sugar at all, it should appear that part, if not the whole of the customs due on sugar, must be drawn back; the safest way of effecting this would be to reduce the duty on the wash, and to pay the sugar duty over from the customs to the excise, in lieu of such reduction. If sugar and grain were used indiscriminately, it would be impossible to ascertain to what point the duty on wash should be reduced; and if the distiller were to be allowed a drawback of the sugar duty, the quantity of sugar used would be at his own discretion; no officer could exercise his judgment, and no controul would be afforded over the officer if he did. The produce of a given quantity of wash made from sugar differs materially from that made from the same quantity of wash from grain; in case of a mixture, the quantity of each article so mixed not being defined, it would be im-

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possible to fix the proportion of credit to be given the distillers. If 19 gallons per hundred of wash from sugar were allowed for the purpose of equallizing the credit given on wash from grain, then a credit would be given of 3 gallons per hundred less than the distiller might produce on that quantity; therefore, on that quantity, no duty would be collected.—The result therefore of the enquiry of the committee is, that however strongly they may feel the distresses and the difficulties under which the West-Indian trade at present labours, however anxious they may be to recommend the adoption of any measure which may tend to afford even a temporary relief from a pressure so heavy and alarming, they do not think the measure of permitting the use of sugar and melasses, for a time to be limited, in the breweries and distilleries, one that would give to the West-Indian trade any relief adequate to its distresses, consistent with the interests of other branches of the community, or with the safety of the revenue. The different rates of duty on the articles used in the distilleries, and the different modes of collecting those duties in the three parts of the united kingdom, constitute, in the present state of things, a difficulty almost insuperable; and the committee cannot but express their wish that such steps may be taken as may tend to remove this barrier, in case at any future time circumstances of imperious necessity may make a measure similar, to that which has been the subject of the committee's consideration, fit and proper to be adopted.

In confirmation of the foregoing statement, your committee have subjoined to their report, by way of appendix, the minutes of the evidence taken before them; together with the several accounts presented to the committee, and referred to in this report.

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REPORT

Delivered to the House of Commons, 24th of July, 1807.

The Committee, who were appointed to take into consideration the commercial state of the West-India Colonies, and to report their proceedings, from time to time, to the house; and who were empowered to report minutes of evidence which were taken before the Committee in the last Session of Parliament, on the West-India Planters Petitions, together with the proceedings:—

HAVE, pursuant to the order of the House, examined the matter to them referred; and have agreed to the following report.

Your committee have thought it their duty, in the first place, to inquire into the situation of the West-India planters at the present moment, and for several years preceding; and have examined various respectable witnesses, proprietors of estates, who have resided many years in the West-Indies, and who have had the properties of several absentees under their management; and also many merchants intimately acquainted with the expences and profits of a great variety of estates, and generally conversant with the West-India commerce. From their testimony it appears, that since the year 1799, there has taken place a progressive deterioration in the situation of the planters, resulting from a progressive diminution of the price of sugar, although at the same time the duty, and all the expences attending the cultivation, have been increasing, till at length the depression of the market has become such, that the prices obtained for

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the last year's crop will not pay the expence of cultivation, except upon estates on a very great scale, making sugar of a very superior quality, or enjoying other extraordinary advantages.—Calculations have been laid before your committee, from accounts of estates both in Jamaica and the other islands; by which it appears, that the British supplies and island expences amount to 20*s.* 10*d.* in the former, and to 19*s.* 6*d.* in the latter, on the cwt. of sugar, after accounting and giving credit for the amount received for the sale of rum. As these calculations are formed upon an average of years, and upon estates of the ordinary scale, and in no respects unusually circumstanced, it appears to your committee, that these sums per cwt. of sugar, may be taken as the average expence of cultivation, independent of interest upon the capital; and your committee are confirmed in this opinion by finding a similar calculation in the report made by the sugar distillery committee, in the last Parliament.—To this must be added an expence of from 15*s.* 6*d.* to 16*s.* per cwt. necessarily incurred for freight, insurance, and other mercantile charges, between the shipping the goods in the colonies, and their being offered to market in this kingdom, forming together an amount of from 35*s.* to 36*s.* which appears, upon this evidence, to be the absolute cost to the planter per cwt. of sugar, before any return of capital can attach.—Upon a reference to the average prices published in the Gazette for the last eight months, which vary from 36*s.* to 31*s.* giving a mean price of 33*s.* 6*d.*, it appears evident that the planters must have cultivated their estates at a loss.

The interest which has been stated to your committee as what should be the fair profit upon a capital of such a nature as that of a sugar estate, consisting not merely of land and negroes, but of buildings of great extent and cost, necessary for the carrying on of such a manufacture, and subject to various and peculiar risks and vicissitudes, is not less than 10 per cent.

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During the period of prosperity previous to 1800, it is stated, that in general the profits did not exceed that sum; and that, from that period, they have gradually diminished to $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{1}{2}$ per-cent, till at the present moment, there is no return of interest whatever.

It may perhaps be right to notice one exception, namely, of an estate most favourably circumstanced in every respect, where the profits are stated to have amounted, during the four years 1795, 1796, 1797, and 1798, to 12 per-cent.; but they appear also to have declined ever since; in 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804, to have been reduced to about 6 per-cent. and in 1805, to about 3 per-cent, and subsequently to have suffered a still further reduction.

In the course of their investigation of the situation of the planters, your committee thought it right to ascertain whether it might not be in their own power, in many instances, to remedy the evils of their situation, by converting their sugar estates to other more profitable cultivation; but the evidence on that point shews, that such a conversion must be attended with so great a sacrifice of capital, as to be out of the question as a measure of relief.

With a view to the prospect for the future they have obtained a return of the quantity of sugar at present in the West-India docks; from which, and from other evidence, it appears, that the quantity now on hand is unusually great for the time of year. The crop of the present year is also on the point of coming into the market.

In investigating the causes of that depression of the market, from whence the whole of the planter's distress appears to originate, the first object which strike your committee, is that extraordinary situation in which he is placed, which prevents him alone (in exceptions to every other similar case) from indemnifying himself for the increase of duty, and of other expence attending his cultivation, by an equivalent increase of price to the consumer. For it appears, that since the year 1799, duty on su-

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gar has been aised from 20*s*. to 27*s*. and contingently to 30*s*. per cwt; the expences of the estates are calculated to have risen, in many articles 50, and in others above 100 per cent; and the price has fallen from 69*s*. to 33*s*. 6*d*. per cwt. the average of the last 8 months. As it appears obvious, from the above statement, that the duty is heavier than the article can bear at its present price, it is suggested that it might be expedient, for the relief of the home market, to extend the principle which has been adopted on the contingent increase of duty from 27*s*. to 30*s*.; so that from the maximum of duty then fixed, on a gross price of 80*s*. affording 30*s*. duty, and 50*s*. to the planter, the duty should be thrown back on a similar scale in proportion to the depression of the market, till the price arrives at 60*s*. gross, leaving 20*s*. (the original duty) to government, and 40*s*. to the planter; or, in other words, a reduction of 1*s*. of duty on a reduction of 2*s*. gross price, from the average then fixed for the imposition of the new duty, as far as 20*s*.

An increase of the bounty on the export has been also recommended; and your committee are of opinion, that it would afford great relief if given as an accompaniment to measures of restriction upon neutrals, so as to render the expences on British and foreign produce equal in the foreign market.

A considerable depreciation in the price of rum having also taken place, it has been suggested, that the encouragement of the consumption of that article would be a considerable advantage to the planter. Your committee are aware that such encouragement has been given, to a certain extent, but if it were found practicable to carry that assistance further, by an increased consumption in the army and navy, such a measure would, in their opinion, have very beneficial effects; or a reduction of duty on rum might afford essential relief to the planter, without loss to the revenue, which would be indemnified by an increased consumption of that spirit.

Great, however, as are the evils of the decrease of

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price and increase of charges, it does not appear to your committee, that they are the original causes of the distress of the planter, by applying to which alone any practicable remedy he could be more than partially relieved; but that the main evil, and that to which these are ultimately to be referred, is the very unfavourable state of the foreign market, in which formerly the British merchant enjoyed nearly a monopoly, but where we cannot at present enter into competition with the planters, not only of the neutral, but of the hostile colonies. The result of all their enquiries on this most important part of the subject have brought before their eyes one grand and primary evil, from which all the others are easily to be deduced; namely, the facility of intercourse between the hostile colonies and Europe, under the American neutral flag, by means of which not only the whole of their produce is carried to a market, but at charges little exceeding those of peace; while the British planter is burthened with all the inconvenience, risk, and expence, resulting from a state of war.

The advantages, which the hostile colonies derive from the relaxation of that principle, which prohibited any trade from being carried on with the enemy's colonies by neutrals during war, which the enemy himself did not permit to those neutrals during peace, may be in part estimated by reference to a statement of the imports into Amsterdam alone from the United States of America in the year 1806, amounting to 34,085 hhds. of coffee, and 45,097 hhds of sugar, conveyed in 211 vessels, hereunto annexed; and to a statement, also annexed, of the amount of the West-India produce, exported from the United States of America, between the 1st of October 1805, and 30th September 1806.—In point of comparative expence, the advantages of the hostile colonies will be further illustrated by the evidence of Mr. Marryat, supported by satisfactory documents, which shew the charges of freight and insurance on sugar from the hostile colonies, through the United States of America, to the ports of

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Holland and Flanders, and to those of the Mediterranean, to be less by 8*s.* 11*d.* to the former, and by 12*s.* 6*d.* to the latter, than those charges on British sugars to the same ports.

Your committee cannot omit to state also another important advantage enjoyed by the French colonies, arising from the sale of nearly the whole French mercantile marine to neutrals, under the stipulation of each vessel being returned into French ports, in order to be navigated as French ships, within twelve months after peace, and with the enjoyment, during war, of the same privileges in the ports of France as if they were actually French; for instance, to import sugar at a duty of 4*s.* per cwt. less than the duty imposed on sugar imported in the neutral vessels.

In order to counterbalance, in some degree, the advantages thus enjoyed by the hostile colonies, to the detriment of the British planter, it has been recommended, that a blockade of the ports of the enemy's settlements should be resorted to; such a measure, if it could be strictly enforced, would undoubtedly afford relief to our export trade.

But a measure of more permanent and certain advantage would be the enforcement of those restrictions on the trade between neutrals and the enemy's colonies, which were formerly maintained by Great-Britain, and from the relaxation of which the enemy's colonies obtained indirectly, during the war, all the advantages of peace; while our own colonies, in the intercourse with whom that system of monopoly which has been held essential to the commercial and military navy of this country is rigorously enforced, are deprived of the advantages under which in former wars they carried their produce to the foreign markets, and which in the present war, by means of our decided naval superiority, would have amounted to the exclusive supply of the whole of Europe; and when those extraordinary measures are taken into consideration, which have been adopted to exclude the British colonial produce from the European market, it appears to

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your committee to be a matter of evident and imperious necessity to resort to such a system, as by impeding and restricting, and as far as possible, preventing the export of the produce of the enemy's colonies from the places of its growth, shall compel the Continent to have recourse to the only source of supply, which, in that event, would be open to it.

As it may be apprehended that from the adoption of such measures, difficulties might arise in that intercourse, from which the West-Indies at present derive a considerable proportion of some of their supplies, your committee have thought it their duty to make inquiry into the resources in that respect to which recourse might be had in such an event. During the only period which affords an example of the suspension of that intercourse, the evidence concurs as to the fact of a supply having been obtained (though not without temporary and occasional inconveniences) from a variety of sources which may reasonably be relied upon in case of such necessity, at the present moment, to a greater amount than at the former period. From the examination of persons who, in consequence of their residence in the British North American settlements, or extensive commercial connections with them, possess the best information as to their present and future resources, there is ground to believe that some supply of the principal articles of lumber might be obtained from thence immediately, and to expect that with due encouragement, the quantity of that supply might be encreased to any extent.

The supply of Flour which they could at present afford to the West-India market would be small, and of inferior quality. They appear to be capable of affording a large supply of fish, and what deficiency might exist in other articles of salt provisions, might be made up by supplies from Europe.

Upon the whole, the impression which your committee have received is, that the trade now carried on between the British West-Indies and the United States of America, is very convenient and advantageous to

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the inhabitants of our colonies, and one which they could not relinquish, without essential detriment, unless it were compensated by other advantages; but that it is not essential to their existence, or equivalent to the disadvantages of their situation, in those respects, which your committee have already gone through in the present statement.

Your committee having briefly stated the distressed situation of the West-India planter,—the causes which have gradually produced his distress, which are beyond his reach to remedy, and which must continue to operate with increased effect,—and having stated such measures of relief as have been suggested to them, and such as from the best sources of information, appear most adequate to the end in view, have only to add, that if those remedies are liable to objections and difficulties, there is on the other hand the strongest concurrent testimony and proof, that unless some speedy and efficient measures of relief are adopted, the ruin of a great number of the planters, and of persons in this country holding annuities, and otherwise dependent upon those properties for their income, must inevitably very soon take place, which must be followed by the loss of a vast capital advanced on securities in those countries, and by the most fatal injury to the commercial, maritime, and financial interests of *Great-Britain*.

Extract from Mr. Hughan's Evidence, p. 25. of the Appendix with the above Report.

If relief, in some mode or other, be not speedily administered to the West-India trade, will not the most serious inconveniences, and in many cases, total ruin ensue? *A.* The pressure which the planter, and all dependent on, or connected with him, has sustained for a length of time, is fast approaching to that crisis, that nothing but inevitable ruin can be the consequence, unless some alteration in circumstances takes place.

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(C.)

Extracts of letters from the West-Indies to an eminent West-India merchant in London.—December 24, 1806.

How is it possible that at my advanced time of life I should be a mere slave of government? that I should be forced to toil like a hireling, and retain no part of my earnings, no recompence for the sweat of my brow; that I should have neither the means of paying my debts, nor of providing for my subsistence. —This description is but too true; for I am forced to pay away half my income to government in a direct tax, and the other half in freight, insurance, and commissions to send my produce home.

From the same to the same.—2d of February, 1807.

Never was my life more unhappy than it now is. It is with the greatest difficulty that I can procure the means of subsistence. All stores are at extravagant prices, and are often not to be bought at all, the warehouses being very scantily provided. All kinds of dry goods are sold only for ready money, at three or four times their former prices. Provisions are still more exorbitant. Beef and pork cost from four to five joes the barrel; butter often between three and four joes; flour is at present from 16 to 24 gourdes the barrel; fish at £6 4*s*. the hundred weight, besides 36*s*. freight; and notwithstanding these extravagant prices, we have often not one of these articles at market. Staves likewise cost from £30 to £50 currency, the thousand, and lumber from £30 to £40, while the produce of the unhappy planter is nothing worth. Judge from this of the condition of the English colonists. Meanwhile the inhabitants of the French islands overflow with money. Notwithstanding the situation of France, they obtain all

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the articles they want at very moderate prices, and sell their produce for cash at a high rate. The export of brown sugar is allowed in the French islands, on paying a tax of ten per cent. Would to God that this were the case with us also, during the remainder of the war. Such a measure would make the British colonies flourish, whereas at present they are plunged in misery.

Extract of a letter from ———— dated Trinidad, 5th February, 1807.

It would be in vain for me to attempt to describe our situation; whichever way I turn, I see nothing but ruin staring us in the face. Nothing keeps us in *vis vitæ*, but the supplies we receive from the United States; and, should we be deprived of them, and the consequent means of bartering their produce for the necessaries of life, we must abandon entirely the culture of canes and manufacture of sugar, and turn our estates into pens for a subsistence; which, should the king's late order in council (founded on the powers granted his majesty by the Intercourse Bill,) be strictly enforced, is the only alternative left us to perishing of famine.* Never was consternation equal to that expressed by this colony on the promulgation of that order. Very little provision, dry or salted, was at that moment in store, but much was expected, in consequence of orders which had been previously given; in the mean time, beef, which was current at 20 dollars, rose instantly to 40; butter, from 18 to 30; pork, from 24 to 64; and fish, from 10 to 16.

* In Trinidad the planters have hitherto been allowed to barter sugar for American stores. This privilege was granted in consequence of that island being newly settled, and much in want of these stores. By the American Intercourse Bill, however, passed in July, 1806, it was provided, that no sugar should be exported from any part of the British West-Indies in American ships; in consequence of which this privilege, so necessary to the welfare of Trinidad, will be at an end, unless continued by an order in Council.

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In this dilemma, the governor and council considered themselves justifiable in suspending the effect of the king's order, until the expiration of the proclamation issued in October, by which the faith of government was pledged to the public for the admission of the articles therein enumerated, until the 22d April. By the fag end of that proclamation we now subsist: the general has, in the mean time, represented the necessity of his majesty's exerting the powers with which he is vested by the bill, to grant the island the privileges he is authorised thereby to do respecting its foreign trade; and unless those are accorded us to their full extent, we are ruined people.

To our friends at home we commit the defence of our cause. A representation is, I am told, to be sent his Majesty on the subject, which I hope will meet with more attention than our complaints have hitherto found. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

The London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Irish merchants, say—"send no sugar home; give it away rather." Government say—"you shall not send it to the United States to be sold, and remitted to England, nor shall you barter it with foreigners for the necessaries of life; at least if you do, those foreigners shall not carry it away."

Extract of a Letter from ——— *Trinidad, March* 8.

I landed here on Friday, and found all things very dull; sugar, selling at public sale, at 2½ dollars.

Our crop will be very large, but there is no standing the expenses of carrying on a sugar estate with the American trade as it is; and you must, my dear sir, exert all your energies to get us *leave to sell sugar*

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for American cargoes. We are ruined completely if the act of parliament be strictly enforced, of stopping the exportation as heretofore; the minor planters have no correspondents in Europe, and the transmission of sugar to England will ruin them at the present prices.

(D.)

Extract from the account laid before the house of commons, of the grain, meal, flour, and rice, imported into Great Britain, between the 1st Oct. 1800, and the 1st Oct. 1801; distinguishing the countries whence, and the ports into which imported.

Russia	142,190	
Sweden	13,049	
Portugal	102	
Gibraltar	3	
Malta	2,000	
Denmark	4,800	
United States of America	20,689	
Ditto in flour	224,754	
British colonies in America	43,950	
From States in amity with Great Britain		451,537
Prussia	349,458	
Germany	339,300	
Holland	124,713	
Poland	226,574	
From States under the control of France		1,040,045

Of 75,323 quarters of barley imported during the same period, only 9000 were received from countries not under the control of France; and of 685,457 quarters of oats, only 21,000 were received from countries not under the control of France.

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(E.)

Statements respecting the Decrease and Discouragement of British Shipping.

Tonnage of	British Vessels	built in 1803 -	115,627
Ditto	Ditto	1804 -	80,146
Ditto	Ditto	1805 -	71,256
Ditto	Ditto	1806 -	58,470

From the above statements laid before the house of commons, it appears that the ship-building of this country has diminished nearly half in the space of three years; and the diminution will be far more rapid this year, as very few ships are now building at any of the ports of Great Britain.

The following statements are extracted from the reports and papers on navigation and trade, printed by order of the society of ship-owners of Great Britain, in 1807, containing many interesting particulars on the distressed state of the British shipping interest, in consequence of the encouragement given to neutral shipping, by the relaxation of the navigation laws.

Since the year 1801, the whole of the capital invested in British shipping, has depreciated in value more than £30 per cent. (Supplement, page 75.)

Since the year 1780, the rate of freights has *decreased* £6: 10: 4 per cent; although, since the same period the price of provisions has *increased* £84: 8: 2 per cent; the price of materials, £122: 10: 2 per cent; and the rate of wages, £39: 7: 1 per cent. (Supplement, page 178.)

No wonder then that brooms were at the mast heads (as tokens of there being for sale,) of near 18,000 tons of shipping in the river Thames alone, last year.—(Supplement, page 130.)

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An account sale of Sugar at the prices current in 1807.

10 Hhds. weighing C. 130.—sold at 60*s.* yield gross £ 390 0 0

Charges,			
Duty 27*s.* per cwt.	£ 175	10	0
Freight 10*s.*	65	0	0
Dock dues 9*d.*	4	17	6
Insurance on £ 200, at 12*gs.* and duty, £ 25 14			
Deduct for convoy 6 per cent. ..... £ 12 0			
	13	14	0
Commission for effecting insurance ½ per cent, ...	1	0	0
Commission and brokerage on the sale 3 per cent on £ 390	11	14	0
Two months interest on duty, primage, pierage, fire insurance, and petty charges	3	10	0
		275	5 6
Proceeds after payment of British charges		114	14 6
But the planter has to pay besides the West-India charges, (see page 22) 20*s.* 6*d.* per cent.		133	5 0
Loss to the planter		£ 18	10 6

So that on every ten hogsheads sold at present prices, the planter loses not only his own labour, and the labour of his negroes, but £ 18 10*s.* 6*d.* besides!

C. and R. Baldwin, Printers,
New Bridge-Street, London.

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SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

FOURTH EDITION.

SINCE the publication of the preceding Edition, the *Edinburgh Review* has treated, at some length, of the distressed state of our West-India Colonies. The extensive circulation of that Journal, makes it important to correct any mistakes which it may contain.

It is a principal argument in the *Edinburgh Review*, that the nominal cost of West-India estates is less than the real. This opinion we find stated in page 152, (Review for October last,) as follows: "Almost the whole plantations now described as worth so much, and sometimes as having cost so much, were obtained for a trifling sum paid down, and a farther payment at very long credits, as the produce of lucky years enabled the speculator to fulfil his bargain." I admit that the customary mode of paying for West-India estates is by yearly instalments, and that a period of between five and ten years generally elapses before the last of these instalments is paid off. But the deposit, or first instalment paid down, so far from being "a trifle," is generally a fourth or more of the whole price; and the succeeding intalments commonly bear interest until paid. Nor does the completion of these

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payments depend so much on the "produce of lucky years," as may be supposed. A third party, namely, the home merchant, the correspondent of the purchaser, is generally interested in making them good, and advances money for that purpose. It is immaterial whether this advance goes directly to the seller as a partial payment, or is applied to the improvement of the land, because the seller, holding a mortgage until the fulfilment of the instalments, whatever benefits the estate adds to his security. However dear the purchase, or however hard the times, the mortgage of the seller is a security which almost always puts his receipts out of doubt. It has happened much more frequently that estates have been over than under paid. The term of years required to render the land the clear property of the buyer, proves much greater than is commonly imagined; and these must be years, not of good fortune merely, but of labour, economy, and good fortune combined.

The next error in the *Edinburgh Review*, and a most essential one it is, occurs in page 153, where the writer maintains, that however individuals may suffer, the West-India body, as a whole, are not losers. The passage is as follows: "As for the position that the "Colonies are on the whole a losing concern, it "rests merely on vague assumptions, and on the ar-"gument of people being found to buy lottery tickets, "which is demonstrably a losing speculation. This "argument, however, is quite inapplicable to the "case of so many persons risking not a small por-

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"tion of their money, which they may do from mere "love of gambling, but the whole, or nearly the "whole of their capital, which they never will em-"ploy in a lottery of the kind alluded to." But, so far from *willingly employing* their capitals in the West-India trade, as is here stated, the public may be assured, that the persons engaged in this branch of commerce would most gladly sacrifice a large proportion, to extricate the remainder. But they cannot extricate their capitals even at any sacrifice. The merchants are so much involved with the planters, that they must stand or fall together, and it would be vain for a West-India merchant, under present circumstances, to ask a capitalist in any other line of business, to purchase his securities even at half cost. Nor has it been by the voluntary acts of the West-India merchants that so much money has been invested in the sugar colonies. A series of unfavourable years has progressively increased their advances, and lessened their remittances. Estates which, ten years ago, appeared likely to require an advance of only £5000, have in most instances required double, and in many cases four or five times as much. The position, that "the Colonies are on the whole a losing concern," is therefore unhappily too true, as far as regards the planter and merchant. But to the Treasury, "this concern" is abundantly productive.

It has been asked, what right have the sugar-planters to relief from the public, more than the cotton-manufacturers, or any other suffering class?

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The answer is obvious: The cotton-manufacturers, and other classes, are not subjected to a monopoly, like the West-India planter, who is ruined by being forced to send all his sugar to one market. Give him the same freedom of sale as you give to others, and he will ask nothing more.

The majority of the West-India body are most solicitous that leave should be given to the planters, to barter sugar for American stores, during the war, instead of being forced, as at present, to pay for these stores in money, which money is afterwards carried to the French islands, and applied to purchase and bring to Europe, the sugar of our Enemies. By permitting this barter, we should sell about 20,000 hhds. of our superfluous produce, of which, when once brought home, all the exertions of our merchants or our government seem unable to get rid. Had we imported 20,000 hhds. less during the present season, prices would ere now have begun to approach to a fair standard, instead of continuing at a rate which will speedily consummate the ruin of the planters. So important would be the benefit of abstracting an apparently inconsiderable proportion of our surplus produce!

The plea advanced against this measure, is the Navigation Laws; a term often in the mouths of people who are strangers to its meaning. This is not the place to agitate the question whether our naval superiority is due to these laws, or to the more substantial advantages of a free government, of supe-

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rior industry, and of an insular situation, affording an unparalleled extent of coast, in the midst of an ocean, calculated to form the best seamen in the world. But it is important to state, that the intercourse of neutrals with our colonies is not prohibited by the Navigation Laws, the principle of which is, "to permit the importation of all articles in the ships of the countries of which these articles are the growth." It is by another law, namely, the Colonial Monopoly Law, that the sale of sugar to foreigners in the West Indies is prohibited, and by an act of no older date than July 1806, that this prohibition is made absolute.

The Colonial Monopoly Act originated at least as much in a view to mercantile profit, as to naval power. The former is voluntarily surrendered, the West-India merchants having prayed Government to permit this relaxation. There remains then only the question, as it affects our shipping. The want of 20,000 hhds. would throw, perhaps, sixty sail of West-Indiamen out of employ. Of what consequence is this in a national view? Better for the Country to pay the owners the value of the shipping tenfold, than to ruin our colonies by persisting to employ them.

It may be alleged, that the proposed permission would be abused, and that much more than 20,000 hhds would be sold to neutrals. This is very unlikely. Neutrals can now find sugar in abundance elsewhere, without bribing the British planter by

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extravagant prices; and the planter well knows, that with fair prices, his property is in the best hands when in Britain. There is no fear, therefore, that an honest planter will exceed the proper limits: and as to those who are otherwise, the same Act which permits this barter, should enable the British creditor to visit severely its abuse on his dishonourable debtor.

It is time that the legislature of this country should turn their attention to the propriety of amending the system of colonial law. That system was established when the colonies were in their infancy. We are now pretty well agreed, that to extend their cultivation would be the worst policy; that our care should now be, not to aid the farther growth of the plant, but to repress its luxuriance. The abolition of the slave-trade constitutes a new epoch in colonial history. The tendency of this wise measure will be to restrain improvident speculation; to give security to the established planter, by fixing more accurately the value of cultivated property; to introduce the habit of punctual payments into a country where the delays of payment have hitherto been endless; finally, it will in time effect a radical change in the character of West-India planters, by extinguishing that sanguine disposition, which was equally adverse to their own prosperity and to that of their connections at home. A state of things so different from the early condition of the colonies certainly requires an accompanying change of legal regulation. A Committee of

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Parliament could not be expected to go into the tedious details to which so extensive a subject would give rise. A permanent Commission would be requisite, and this Commission should be composed of men who combine a practical knowledge of the colonies with liberal views of general policy.

However unpopular it may be, in London, to speak of peace at the present moment, it is a duty to combat even favourite opinions, if they appear to be founded in error. My arguments on this head proceed on the assumption that we may at present make peace on conditions equivalent to the highly honourable terms offered to Lord Lauderdale, and which, it is confessed, in the late Declaration against Russia, we rejected on her account and not on our own. It is mere assertion to say, that Bonaparte, intoxicated with success, will not repeat these offers. We have nothing to do with his Continental successes; over *us* he has gained no advantage: but it is with *us* that he must treat, and he has not even pretended that recent events gave him a right to lower his offers. These offers were—the retention of Malta and the Cape, with the restitution of Hanover, on condition of our restoring Pondicherry and our West-India conquests. Sicily he was ambitious to acquire; but this was a distinct consideration, as he offered for it, by way of equivalent, Pondicherry and Tobago to us, and the Balearic Islands to the King of Sicily.

It is probable, that few amongst us would refuse

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to conclude peace, as far as regards territorial cessions, on such conditions as these. Our objections to peace are of a different kind: they proceed from a dread that our commerce with the Continent may be oppressed by Bonaparte, and that the French may increase their marine to a dangerous extent.

First, as to impeding our commerce with the Continent during peace. This is, in all probability, one of those gratuitous suppositions which have no existence but in our own imaginations. We have the clearest evidence, that Bonaparte is solicitous to make peace with us. He knows, that while he is at war with England, his government cannot be thoroughly popular in France. He knows, that the French people are sick of a war, which, so far from gratifying their national vanity, offers no prospect to them but disgrace and privation. These powerful considerations have made even *his* stubborn heart to bend, and to yield, by the proffered cession of Malta, the point of honour between the two countries. He well knows, that the peace which he labours so much to obtain, would be broken by us, whenever he should take measures hostile to our commerce. Nay, he has openly acknowledged that the rupture of 1803 was caused by the complaints of our merchants.* Is it probable, is it conformable to common sense, that, with this knowledge, he will wantonly throw away what he is so solicitous to procure?

* See, in the Negotiation Papers, Talleyrand's Letters to Mr. Fox.

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Some persons may allege, with a show of sagacity, that his view is, first to obtain peace, and afterwards to commence an insidious policy against our commerce. This might be plausible, were we weak enough to think of surrendering to him Malta and the Cape, as we did at Amiens. But by a peace on the terms offered to Lord Lauderdale, France could gain nothing which would enable her to do hereafter what she cannot do at present. All that she asked was the restoration of Pondicherry, and of our West-India conquests—conquests which very few amongst ourselves think it advisable to retain.

But it will be said, that on occasion of the former peace, in 1802, Bonaparte attempted to exclude our commerce from the Continent.—Granted: but matters were then very different. We had not then taught him that we were able to fight France single-handed; the battle of Trafalgar had not been fought; he was inflated by sudden elevation, and still more by the low tone which we had held at Amiens. Add to these the provocations and insults daily offered in our newspapers to a mind at that time doubly irritable from the recency of his usurpation and the insecurity of his power. How altered is the present state of things! He has felt our strength as a nation, and will not lightly offend us; while the consolidation of his own government renders him comparatively indifferent to the licence of our press.

After the American war, a treaty of commerce

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was concluded between France and England, which was reputed very advantageous to us. So complicated, however, are the operations of commerce, that the terms apparently most favourable frequently prove in fact the most pernicious. The best policy for any two governments, is simply to stipulate justice and protection for their respective subjects, without giving an artificial direction to their industry by particular regulations. Our trade with America, the most valuable of our foreign branches, does not certainly owe its prosperity to the provisions of treaties. In regard to the taxation of each other's merchandize, the natural and just rule between any two countries is the observance of reciprocity.—Can we doubt of Bonaparte's readiness to subscribe to these principles? If we do doubt it, let him be called on to state, before we even enter upon negotiation, the general laws by which the commercial intercourse of France and England would be regulated in peace: and if we receive an unfavourable or even an evasive answer, it will then be time to pronounce peace impracticable, and to prosecute war with double ardour.

Next, as to the danger of France forming a large marine in peace. It is important to observe, that if this be an argument against peace, it will probably exist as strongly after ten years more of war, as at present; for nothing that we can do in war is likely to deprive France of the capacity of increasing her marine in peace. It would be an argument for perpetual war, and accordingly it has been a

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standing topic with alarmists from the days of Louis XIV. Yet in every war since that period, as in every former war, we have beaten the French at sea. Is our power abridged by late events? No: but France, it will be said, has acquired a large addition of sea-coast. Now, it has been stated in the preceding pamphlet, that the only part of her recent acquisitions which can train efficient seamen, is Holland, and the short line of coast bordering on Westphalia. Are these so formidable as to make us afraid of concluding peace? Or, rather, would not the correction of visible errors in the constitution of our military force, more than counterbalance this accession of naval strength to France? Nay, to argue the point on the mere matter of territorial acquisition, how many more seamen are not we likely to have now than before the French revolution?—We, who have doubled our yearly importations from the West Indies, and have conquered all India! Besides, the best of all nurseries for our seamen is the inexhaustible fishery on our own coasts. It has been declared before a Committee of the House of Commons, that "at a peace we should be the first fishermen in the world." Could the skill of man have devised a more effectual bulwark against a foreign enemy, than a judicious improvement of those riches which Providence has scattered from the northern to the southern extremity of our islands? Multiply your fishermen in all directions, and you will find them a present aid in time of danger. Their business leads them neither to the East nor to the West; their permanent station

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lies in the teeth of invasion; they are always disposable: and, whether you incorporate them with your navy, or employ them separately along the coast, you will find them an efficient barrier against the enemy.

But, had the French marine gained twice as much in new resources as it has done, the auspicious discovery of the method of breaking their line, and forcing them to fight us whenever we meet them, would more than compensate these advantages. It is altogether owing to this most fortunate discovery, that our naval battles are now of so different a stamp from those of former wars. Without this manœuvre, the French would have escaped Lord Howe on the 1st June, the Spaniards might have eluded Lord St. Vincent, the Dutch would have sailed into the Texel on the 11th October, and without it, Villeneuve might, if he had chosen, have fled from Lord Nelson. Even in the lesser engagement, under Sir Richard Strachan, it was the application of this formidable discovery which forced four French ships to fight antagonists against whom they had no hopes of success. This manœuvre is of that open and direct kind which suits our national character; it admits of no chicane: it opposes man to man, a mode of combat in which, whether on sea or on shore, at Maida as at Trafalgar, we have always beaten the French. With good ships, it is almost always practicable, and in our hands it has never yet failed to be decisive.

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Peace, so far from weakening our controul over the restless ambition of Bonaparte, would effectually increase it. At present, France is so completely stripped of ships and trade, that we can find little more to take. Bonaparte proceeds in his aggressions on the Continent, because he thinks that the greatest provocation can scarcely make our hostility worse than it is; but let him repossess St. Domingo, let France have several millions of property on the ocean, let a large proportion of Bonaparte's revenue depend on the produce of his customs, and he will pause long before he commits any act calculated to draw down the vengeance of our navy.

It is a common, or rather an almost universal opinion in this country, that he has vowed our ruin, and will unceasingly pursue it. It is very natural for *us* to think in that way of so furious an adversary; but a calm spectator would pronounce that the very excess of his fury was an argument against its duration. Be assured, the intemperate rage, the ungovernable passion of a Bonaparte is less dangerous, in a political view, than the unrelenting dissimulation of a Philip II. Read the official papers of Lord Whitworth's and Lord Lauderdale's negotiations, and you will see that this man, whom we imagine to be at all times a consummate hypocrite, falls into the same unguarded effusions as other passionate men; and that he is often forced to undergo the mortification of renouncing what in a momentary paroxysm he had threatened. It would be easy to show, that he has the strongest reason to

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covet our approbation; but the truth is, that his aversion or his favour is of little consequence to a country which would disdain his alliance, and can punish his hatred, whenever it assumes the aspect of hostility.

While we are treating of the arrogance of Bonaparte, it may be well to remember, that there has frequently been no small degree of *hauteur* on our side. If, for instance, we turn to the Negotiation Papers of Lord Lauderdale, we shall find, that while Bonaparte was alternately submissive and passionate, our uniform tone was that of loftiness and defiance. Read his Lordship's two letters, of the 26th September, the latter of which concludes with his telling the French minister, "that as long as he remained at Paris, *he never would refuse to see him.* Now had a French ambassador in London presumed to adopt a disdainful style to a British minister, would it not have sufficed to put an end to the negotiation? Would not the nation have demanded an immediate apology; or have insisted, that before the treaty could proceed, the offending envoy should be replaced by a more accommodating successor?

I am unwilling to dwell on the late meetings to petition for peace; as, however advantageous I consider peace, it is no part of my argument to urge its conclusion on the plea of necessity.

The advocates for war may be divided into two

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classes: those who gain by the war, and those who, without any personal advantage, are afraid of the consequences of peace. To the former, it would be idle to address any arguments: to the latter, I would recommend an attentive perusal both of the papers relative to Lord Lauderdale's negotiation, and of Mr. Pitt's speech (3d November, 1801) on the treaty of Amiens.

If, by continuing the war, we aim at irritating Bonaparte, we shall succeed — the display of enmity wounds a temper like his to the quick. But if we flatter ourselves, that by war we are likely to stop his encroachments, or to abridge the power of France, we are mistaken. For instance, if he means to dismember Turkey, what obstacles can we oppose to it by war, now that all Europe is against us? But were he at peace with us, he would feel, as he did during last peace, and as he told Lord Whitworth, (on the 18th February, 1803) that, "however much he might covet Egypt, his best policy would be to forbear the attempt, as it might lead to a war, by which he would lose more than he would gain."

The mere event of peace with France would at once put an end to our differences with other countries, as the causes of these differences *exist only during war*. Our grand subjects of dispute with America are the questions of search and of intercourse, *during war*, with the enemy's colonies. With Russia, the bone of contention is about the

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extent to which neutrals may lawfully trade with belligerents. Now all these points, which, if the war with France continues, threaten to spread far and wide the scene of bloodshed, will fall to the ground, without even the formality of a letter or a conference, whenever Britain and France lay down their arms. The cause of our quarrel with Russia once removed, is it likely that she will cultivate a connection with France, her natural enemy, or with Britain, her natural ally?

To conclude—If Bonaparte refuse to stipulate that our intercourse with the Continent shall be unrestrained, there is an end of treating. But if he distinctly admit this important condition; if he again acknowledge, as he has already done, our right to interfere in continental affairs* (with a mutual compact to abstain from encroachment on other States); and if he offer us, on the score of territorial possession, the same terms which he offered to Lord Lauderdale; we need not fear to conclude peace. Nor need we apprehend that our commercial progress, compared to that of France, will be otherwise than it always has been, namely, a demonstration of the superiority of a country possessing freedom, industry, and capital, over a country with little capital, with no fixed habits of industry, and doomed to be governed by a succession of despots.

* Talleyrand's Letter of 2d June, 1806.

THE END.

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